
Mr. Chairman,

We thank the Secretary General for his reports on this agenda item, “Promotion and Protection of Human Rights”.

Mr. Chairman,

It does not need repeating that human Rights are inalienable rights afforded to every person in this world. The importance of human rights can be understood from the meaning of the word ‘inalienable’ which means – ‘absolute, sacred and incapable of being surrendered’. Thus the significance of the national, regional and international efforts to promote and protect these rights cannot be overstated. These rights are also the cornerstone of the Charter of the United Nations. We appreciate the institutionalization of these rights within the UN system through the establishment of the Human Rights Council and the Office of the High Commission for Human Rights (OHCHR).

Mr Chairman,

The mission of the promotion and protection of human rights within the United Nations was put on a firm footing with the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) in 1948. In the UDHR we recognized that the inherent dignity and the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world. This was further reinforced by the development of a series of international human rights instruments in a short period of sixty years, with the most recent addition being the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in 2007.

This Convention reminds us that human rights are not only the civil and political rights that the world media tends to focus on. A comprehensive debate on human rights is only possible if we understand the importance of economic, social and cultural rights, including the right to development and their inter-linkage with civil and political rights.

Mr. Chairman,

The multiplicity of the various treaty bodies had imposed several constraints on the effective and timely submission of the country reports. In this regard, we welcome the streamlining of the reporting process by a revised harmonization of the guidelines, including a common core document and treaty specific documents. This has not only reduced the element of duplication, but also has preserved scarce resources by maintaining uniform standards. We welcome the efforts made by the OHCHR in providing support, when requested, to States in developing countries to submit these reports.

This harmonization has also assisted the Committees of the Treaty Bodies to make assessments and practical recommendations. We appreciate these recommendations and acknowledge the impact they have on the strengthening of
domestic legal regimes. However, in this context, it is important to reiterate that treaty bodies must give due credence to development, democracy and human rights as interrelated issues, in order to fully implement the goals of promoting and protecting fundamental freedoms and human rights.

We would also like to reiterate our support to the treaty bodies in the performance of their functions, and would continue to endeavour to fulfil our reporting obligations under the various treaty bodies. In fact, last week our ‘exceptional report’ to the treaty body, the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), was examined by the Committee.

Mr. Chairman,

We have concerns about the delay in the examination of country reports by the treaty bodies. We support every initiative to speed up the process, including holding additional meetings to optimize the number of reports that the treaty bodies can consider. We also urge the OHCHR to take all necessary measures to deal with the existing backlog of country reports. The treaty bodies play an extremely important role in upholding human rights and democratic values in various developing countries. We reiterate our faith in the independence of the treaty bodies and hope that they will continue to execute their tasks in an objective manner rather than subjectively.

Mr. Chairman,

Let me also draw your attention to the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) process, which has been acknowledged as one of the most important mechanisms of the field of human rights. Although the UPR process is only 4 years old, its successes have been commendable and all States, regardless of their size or development, will be “UPR-ised” by next year. We commend the effort that has been made by all the participating States to make this process a success, as also the support it has received from OHCHR and civil society. We consider the UPR to be a positive, indeed a unique, mechanism that enhances our commitment to making a genuine difference to the improvement of human rights on the ground.

We agree with the High Commissioner of Human Rights, when she mentioned in her report about the complementarity of the UPR with other human rights mechanisms. This complementarity is confirmed by the fact that many of the UPR recommendations formulated so far have been guided by the observations, recommendations and conclusions of human rights treaty bodies, special procedures and the reports of OHCHR.

Mr Chairman,
As a founder member of the United Nations, and as a liberal, secular democracy, India attaches considerable importance to the promotion and protection of human rights. India is proud of its achievements in nurturing a diverse, multi-religious and multi-faceted society. India straddles all divides of ethnicity, religion, and language through its pluralist, moderate and democratic political culture.

We are perhaps the world’s largest representative democracy and pride ourselves in a parliamentary system whose representatives are elected by more than 700 million registered voters. Our democratic values are reflected in our strong belief in principles of freedom of speech and expression, and of the dignity of labor. With our Constitutional guarantees, impartial judiciary, a progressive Parliament, a free and vibrant media, and a thriving civil society with a well established NGO community, India continues in her unflagging endeavour to promote and protect the fundamental freedom and human rights of all our citizens.

We will continue to play our part and contribute to the realization of the ideas enshrined in the International Bill of Human Rights. We attach the highest importance to the work of the human rights institutions, including Treaty Bodies, and will continue to actively participate in them and contribute to their effective functioning both at the official level and through the nomination of experts as members of these bodies. Allow me, Mr Chairman, to express India’s firm commitment to all the national, regional and multilateral human rights mechanisms and to the promotion and protection of all human rights for all.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.