

**Address to the 61<sup>st</sup> session of the  
United Nations Commission on Human Rights  
by Mr. Šarūnas Adomavičius,  
Under-Secretary of Foreign Affairs of Lithuania  
Geneva, 16 March 2005**

Mr. Chairman, Honourable High Commissioner, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Allow me to congratulate you, Mr. Chairman, and the Bureau of the Commission on the election to this highly responsible position. I have the honour to congratulate Ms. Louise Arbour, the High Commissioner for Human Rights with her first session of the Commission in this capacity and wish her most fruitful and successful work in this office.

Lithuania aligns itself with the statement of the European Union presented by the esteemed colleague from Luxemburg.

Mr. Chairman,

For some people enjoyment of human rights is part of their daily life, for others - this still remains a dream. Many things determine this dream come true, yet focusing on people must become central in the activities of states and the international community as a whole in order to achieve it. We have to see a human being behind the problems we are dealing with. Only when different issues are solved bearing in mind this perspective the world becomes more humane.

We have created numerous and elaborated standards, however at the same time some of most basic human rights are still being not observed or even violated. The purpose of introducing these rules is to improve life of a person and when this is not happening, the standard loses its purpose.

As it is shown in practice, international community can and does assist states in carrying out the task of protection and promotion of human rights. However, it is with the state that the primary responsibility to create conditions to implement and to respect the human rights lies.

In Lithuania's experience ombudsman institutions, both with general competence and with competence in a particular field have proved themselves efficient in protecting and furthering human rights. Not only they defend rights of persons but also by their proposals and experience contribute to state policies and laws, reviewing the compatibility of national laws and practices with international human rights norms. Their vast expertise can be utilized in dealing with a wide range of question. For example, Lithuania's ombudsman office for equal opportunities of men and women after a couple years of work was granted a wider field of responsibility, and my country is prepared to share it's experience in this area.

Mr. Chairman,

As states we must continuously strive to meet our obligations in accordance with the universal standards of human rights. International treaty monitoring mechanisms are extremely valuable tools in assisting states to identify problems and in indicating ways to improvement. However, this assistance could only be provided when the treaty monitoring bodies have timely and sufficient information. Both sides of the reporting process should work assisting each other, as only then the process will have real effect on the situation on the ground.

Lithuania welcomes the treaty bodies reform process aimed at strengthening and modernising the reporting process as well as the harmonisation of the working methods of the treaty bodies' themselves.

Mr. Chairman,

An important contribution to the effective work of the State institutions on the national level is provided by non-governmental organizations. Continuous dialogue with NGOs helps to promote openness and transparency in government activities and shape policies more closely related to people's aspirations. This form of involvement of the civil society is extremely valuable; it ought to be supported and encouraged. The more active NGOs are, the more benefit they give to the human rights situation and to democracy as a whole.

However, situation of non-state actors in some parts of the world does give ground for concern. Declaration on the Right and Responsibility of Individuals, Groups and Organs of Society to Promote and Protect Universally Recognized Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms was adopted more than six years ago. However, in many countries of the world, human rights defenders who play a crucial role in the fight against violations of human rights are still subject to threats, arbitrary detentions, disappearance, torture, or executions. Yet it is primary State's responsibility to guarantee that individuals and associations have necessary conditions to freely exercise their activities for the dissemination, promotion and protection of human rights.

Mr. Chairman,

Situation of human rights could benefit and also be furthered by cooperation of States with the Commission's special procedures. In this regard, and noting the impediments to the conduct of democratic elections in Belarus in 2004 as documented by the OSCE Election Observation Mission, we call on Belarus to cooperate fully with all the mechanisms of the Commission on Human Rights, as requested in its resolutions 2003/14 and 2004/14, and in particular with the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Belarus

Also, several special rapporteurs with thematic mandates are still waiting for replay to their requests to visit Chechnya of the Russian Federation. We hope that determination to resolve human rights issues in Chechnya and to improve the situation, indicated by the Russian Federation during consultations with the EU will be followed by appropriate actions. Task of changing human rights situation in that region is immense and we expect that all necessary recourses will be utilized in achieving it.

Mr. Chairman,

In conclusion, I would like to briefly touch upon the recommendations contained in the Report of the High-Level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change. We have been presented with the recommendations and the decisions are yet to be made. All further steps must be first evaluated bearing in mind the centrality of human rights and their impact on all aspects of the organisation's work.

Finally, Mr. Chairman, I wish you every success for the coming weeks, and hope that our deliberations are productive in advancing the agenda of human rights in the world.

I thank you, Mr. Chairman.