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**Statement  
by H.E. Mr. Borys Tarasyuk,  
Minister for Foreign Affairs of Ukraine,  
at the high level segment  
of the 61<sup>st</sup> session  
of the Commission on Human Rights**

Geneva, 15 March 2005

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**Mr. Chairman,  
Madame High Commissioner,  
Distinguished delegates,  
Ladies and gentlemen,**

At the outset let me warmly congratulate you, Mr. Chairman, on taking the chair of the 61<sup>st</sup> session of the Commission. I wish you every success in the exercise of this responsible office.

This session has a particular importance for Ukraine as we take up our Vice-chairmanship of this body. I wish to thank all delegations who supported Ukrainian candidate.

I would also like to express my appreciation to Ms. Louise Arbour, High Commissioner for Human Rights, and her staff for their fruitful work.

**Mr. Chairman,**

It is a special pleasure for me to address this forum as a Foreign Minister of the new Ukrainian Government, appointed after the election of the President Viktor Yushchenko and the events widely known as the *Orange Revolution*.

I have the honor to represent the nation that has overthrown authoritarian and corrupt regime and builds its statehood on the principles of democracy, rule of law and observance of human rights.

The new wind comes from Ukraine.

It brings fresh breath to Europe and to the whole world.

Three months ago Ukrainians as a proud European nation inspired by the highest human rights standards stood up not for piece of bread, but for their dignity and freedom of choice to be respected.

My nation had courage to confront harassment and suppression and to struggle for its rights.

And my nation won.

Today I am proud to bring **the message of victory and democratic solidarity** from Kyiv to this esteemed assembly.

The democratic and non-violent *Orange Revolution* opened a new chapter in Ukraine's history and brought a tangible change to geopolitical situation and international politics.

The world witnessed the demands of a new wave of democratic development, the strongest since the velvet revolutions in Central-Eastern European states and the collapse of the Soviet Union.

Our new administration set bold but achievable goals comprising the reforms in the domestic political, administrative and judicial spheres.

As President Viktor Yushchenko said in his recent address to the European Parliament, "*It is time to move beyond words and take action to develop democracy, the rule of law, freedom of the media, and to root out corruption*".

Our key objective is to promote the area of freedom and justice in our region and to strengthen space of stability and cooperation homogeneous with the European Union and stretching from Vitebsk to Baku.

But the ideals of democracy would be hopeless unless they are universally embraced.

I cannot but agree with my old friend Javier Solana, EU High Representative for common foreign and security policy, who recently noted that "*the experiences in Georgia and Ukraine are encouraging others to follow, in Europe and beyond*".

**Mr. Chairman,**

After the *Orange revolution* the promotion and protection of human rights and basic freedoms have become the top priority for the Ukrainian Government both in its internal policies and external strategies.

For us there is no longer a distinction between principles and pragmatic approaches between persuing the Ukrainian interests, on the one hand, and persuing the Ukrainian convictions, on the other.

Neither national security, nor economic prosperity could be achieved without the promotion of justice, rule of law and human rights.

New democratic Ukraine as an integral part of the European Community of democracies cannot leave unnoticed human rights violation in any particular country.

This is my **my second key message** I bring from Kyiv.

And **the third message** is our support to the measures, aimed at strengthening the UN machinery of human rights cooperation.

There can be no doubt that the way in which we tackle these issues within the United Nations, including the Commission, requires radical overhaul.

The Commission must take decisive steps to restore its "sinking credibility".

Over the years the Commission has been providing the international community with universal human rights frameworks embedded in the Universal Declaration, the International Covenants and other core human rights treaties.

These instruments have inspired provisions in many national constitutions and laws, and led to the creation of national and international infrastructures for the promotion and protection of human rights.

But, today promotion and protection of human rights is not so much a question of writing new rules and creating new instruments and mandates as of implementing our existing ones more effectively.

We need to move away from biased approaches and to engage in an honest dialogue on whether the international community has managed to promote genuine improvement in human rights through the established mechanisms.

Have countries been persuaded to improve their record of human rights simply because resolutions regarding them have been adopted by our Commission or the General Assembly?

Have these documents made a difference for those who were already suffering from human rights violations?

Which countries confronted by "mobilization of shame" at the United Nations have released prisoners, ended torture, stopped abductions of political opponents or improved respect for human rights?

The Vienna Declaration highlights the interplay of universality with national and regional particularities. Our task now is, on the one hand, to respect specificities and, on the other hand, to develop and to promote universal values.

In respect of those states that are making efforts to improve their human rights situation, our basic position should be to encourage these efforts rather than condemn shortcomings. Through friendly and nonconfrontational dialogue, we can learn more from each other and overcome our differences.

We also need to set up criteria in which circumstances the international community may and should apply measures tougher than merely drawing attention to the situation of human rights violations. When states manifestly fail to meet their responsibility towards their citizens the international community has to act accordingly. The international community needs to build a common understanding of the tools, which can be used to prevent abuses and to stop emerging threats.

Ukraine welcomes the strong emphasis that the report of the High-Level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change places on the area of human rights in general as well as the fact that the Panel has agreed on bold suggestions as to the restructuring of the UN work in the human rights.

We fully support the idea of further mainstreaming human rights into the work of the Security Council and welcome the recommendations in this regard, including on a more active and frequent involvement of the High Commissioner for Human Rights in the Security Council deliberations.

Ukraine also sees merit in the idea of giving the Office of High Commissioner for Human Rights the authority to prepare periodical reports on the situation of human rights in the world. However, the report should cover every country and we need to agree on clear criteria for its provisions. The idea of the Commission's universal membership deserves serious consideration from the viewpoint of the universality of human rights agenda.

We are open to looking at other options for reform, and will evaluate any proposals in terms of whether they would achieve the objective of a more effective and efficient human rights machinery.

**Mr. Chairman,**

Recently the international community has commemorated the memory of the victims of Auschwitz that serves for us as a terrible symbol of Holocaust. Two years ago Ukraine paid tribute to the victims of another genocidal act committed by totalitarian regime - Holodomor, which took lives of 7 to 10 million of Ukrainians.

The Great Famine that engulfed Ukraine in 1932-33 was the result of the deliberate policy of forced collectivization, accompanied by devastating purges of the Ukrainian intelligentsia, religious leaders and politicians.

Back in 1933 the world did not respond to our tragedy. The price for denying this crime was very high. When it was clear that Stalin had gotten away with such massive genocide in Ukraine, Hitler felt free to proceed with the Holocaust. For long time the totalitarian regime kept its terrors in the shadow of the Iron Curtain.

What should we learn from these lessons?

We need to have timely information to prevent atrocities, an early warning mechanism to make clear link, which is often ignored until too late, between massive and systematic violations of human rights and threats to international peace and security. In this regard, Ukraine welcomed the appointment of a Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on the Prevention of Genocide.

We should ensure that early warning of genocidal acts is not ignored and responded to accordingly by the United Nations and its Security Council.

We should make it irreversible that perpetrators of genocide are brought to justice.

And finally, we should do everything to bar genocidal ideologies from ever being given a chance to take root again.

Breaking cycles of hatred in any community requires acknowledging the past, promoting tolerance, dialogue and mutual respect, as well as developing educational and other programmes which provide a tangible alternative. That is why Ukraine will continue its work to make the truth about Holodomor wide-known in the world and to achieve recognition of Holodomor as a genocide against Ukrainian people.

In conclusion, **Mr. Chairman**, let me stress, that here, in Geneva, we have the opportunity, the privilege and the obligation to make a real difference in the lives of millions of people. In doing so, we serve not only them - we can make the world a better, safer, more prosperous place for every nation. As members of this Commission, we have a decision to make. I urge this session to make a difference. Let us back up our words of support for human rights with real action.

Thank you.