**Statement by H.E. Mr. Joaquín Alexander MAZA MARTELLI**

**President of the Human Rights Council**

At the opening of the eighteenth session of

the Human Rights Council Advisory Committee

Monday, 20 February 2017, 11 a.m.

Palais des Nations, Salle XX

Mr. Chairperson,

Distinguished Members of the Human Rights Council Advisory Committee,

Mr. Adam Abdelmoula, Director of the Human Rights Council and Treaty Mechanisms Division of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights,

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a great honour and a pleasure to welcome you to this eighteenth session of the Human Rights Council Advisory Committee.

Allow me first to congratulate Mr. Lazhari Bouzid, Ms. Mona Omar, and Mr. Xinsheng Liu, on their election to this Committee.

I wish to also congratulate Mr. Mikhail Lebedev, Mr. Kaoru Obata, Ms. Karla Hanania de Varela and Mr. Jean Ziegler, on their re-election to the Committee for another three-year term. As you know, in the upcoming thirty-fourth session of the Human Rights Council, we will elect a new Expert from the Eastern Europe Group, following the resignation of Ms. Laura-Maria Crăciunean-Tatu.

As the Human Rights Council moves into its second decade, it will continue to rely on the great expertise of its Advisory Committee.

Distinguished Committee Members,

Let me now turn to the work of the Human Rights Council relating to the deliberations that you will engage in during this 18th session. As is customary, I would like to provide you with an overview of issues that relate to your work that the Council has considered since you last met -- in particular during its 33rd session.

As you know, Mr. Yigezu presented the Committee’s **annual report** to the Council as well as the reports on the **global issue of unaccompanied migrant children and adolescents and human rights** (A/HRC/33/53) and on the **activities of vulture funds and the impact on human rights** (A/HRC/33/54). He also took the opportunity to inform the Council about the Advisory Committee’s research proposals, notably the proposal on **climate displaced persons and human rights**.

During the interactive dialogue on the annual report, your Committee was encouraged to engage more actively with national and regional human rights mechanisms in the context of its study on **regional arrangements on human rights**.

On **unaccompanied migrant children and adolescents** and human rights, the Council took note of the Committee’s request for additional time for the submission of the final report, which is now expected at its thirty-sixth session next September. A panel discussion on this issue will be held during the 35th session next June, to identify challenges and best practices by countries of origin, transit and destination, and possible joint efforts at all levels to protect the human rights of unaccompanied migrant children and adolescents.

The Council also held a panel discussionon **youth and human rights** in order to identify challenges, best practices and lessons learned in the exercise of human rights by young people, as well as relevant opportunities for the empowerment of youth in the exercise of their rights. The Deputy High Commissioner for Human Rights, Ms. Kate Gilmore, highlighted that there are 1.8 billion young people worldwide, the most the world has ever seen, which means that sustainable development cannot be achieved without their active participation. Moreover, the Secretary-General’s Envoy on Youth, Mr. Ahmad Alhendawi, underscored that the adoption of the resolution on youth and human rights provided an opportunity to bring youth issues to the Human Rights Council in a systematic and meaningful way, and emphasized that together the international community can widen the democratic space by strengthening youth participation and promoting their rights.

The Council also adopted a **resolution on local government and human rights, in which it took note with appreciation of the research-based report of the Advisory Committee** on the role of local government in the promotion and protection of human rights. Through this resolution, the Council decided to convene an intersessional panel discussion between its thirty-fifth and thirty-sixth sessions, on the role of local government in the promotion and protection of human rights, to identify ways in which local governments can promote, protect and fulfil human rights effectively, particularly in the context of implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, in close cooperation with their national governments. This panel discussion has been scheduled to take place on 4 September 2017.

Distinguished Committee Members, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Let me now briefly turn to the upcoming **thirty-fourth session of the Human Rights Council**, which will take place from 27 February to 24 March.

During the session, the Council will hold ten panel discussions, including the annual high-level panel on human rights mainstreaming, which this year will focus on “The contribution of human rights to peacebuilding through the enhancement of dialogue and international co-operation for the promotion of human rights”.

The Council will furthermore hold interactive dialogues with 20 mandate holders of the special procedures, as well as with two Special Representatives of the Secretary General. It will also consider reports and hold interactive dialogues with the Commission on Human Rights in South Sudan and the commissions of inquiry on Burundi and on Syria.

During the second week of the session, the Council will consider the annual report of the High Commissioner and hold interactive dialogue with him, as well as hold an enhanced interactive dialogue on the rights of migrants in the context of large movement.

During the third week, the Council will receive the reports of the Forum on human rights, democracy and rule of law, the Forum on Minority issues and the Social Forum, as well as the report on the annual meeting of the Special Procedures.

And during the fourth week of the session, the Council will hold interactive dialogues under item two and item ten.

Also during the final week of the session, the second cycle of the Universal Periodic Review will conclude with the adoptions of the outcomes of the last 11 States reviewed at the 26th session of the Working Group on Universal Periodic Review in November 2016.

The Council is also expected to appoint seven special procedures mandate holders, including the Special Rapporteur on the right to development; the Special Rapporteur on the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association; a member of the Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances from Latin American and Caribbean States; and four members of the Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, from the Arctic, Asia, North America and the Pacific.

The Council will also elect a member of the Human Rights Council Advisory Committee from the Group of Eastern European States.

Later this year, your Committee is due to present to the Council its final report on leprosy in June and progress reports on the non-repatriation of funds of illicit origins and on unaccompanied migrant children in September. The Human Rights Council looks forward to the presentation of these reports, as well as to the interactive dialogue with you, Mr. Chairperson.

Distinguished Committee Members,

I cannot conclude my remarks without expressing my sincere appreciation for the work of this Committee. Your expertise on a broad range of human rights issues, your efforts to draw the attention of the Council to emerging issues, and your determination to collect information from a wide range of stakeholders is highly valued.

It was a pleasure to address you this morning, at the start of what I trust will be a productive **eighteenth session** of the Human Rights Council Advisory Committee.

Thank you.