



CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

PERMANENT MISSION OF SWEDEN

STATEMENT
BY
SWEDEN

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Let me start by fully associating myself with the remarks just made by Minister Steinmeier on behalf of the European Union.

The protection and promotion of human rights is one of the central duties of the international community of our times.

Not only is it a question of protecting individual human beings – their life, their freedom, their future – but it is also important in promoting peace and stability across the globe.

We know all too well from the bitter lessons of history that regimes that violate the rights of their citizens often are the regimes that threaten the international system – its peace, its stability- as well.

Also for that reason it should be evident that our protection for one individual somewhere is the protection of all individuals everywhere.

The past decade and a half has seen important progress in the respect for human rights and the commitment to democracy and the rule of the law - but in recent years the pace of progress seems to be slowing down. This must be a cause for concern.

And it is not only that the pace of improvements are slowing down. We see massive abuses continuing which we have difficulties addressing adequately. And we are also seeing new restrictions being imposed when freedom seeks new ways – I'm thinking of the different restrictions on the use of the Internet being imposed by authoritarian regimes.

All of this only underlines the crucial importance of the work of the Human Rights Council.

But as it addresses the different issues of human rights throughout the world, it must be acutely aware that it itself is being closely watched. It is up to the Council itself through its actions to disprove those that fear that it will not live up to the high expectations placed on it.

And this can only be done by vigorously and objectively addressing all the different human rights challenges of today.

It is all too obvious that there are many human rights violations in addition to those obvious ones on the occupied Palestinian territories.

Of particular concern is the situation in Darfur in Sudan. The fact that the Government of Sudan blocked the entry of the fact-finding

mission must not prevent the Council from addressing this issue with the utmost seriousness. It must remain a priority for the Council.

But there are – unfortunately – numerous other issues that merit attention. The situations in countries like Burma, DPRK, Belarus, Cuba, Uzbekistan and Iran are among those that very clearly need to be addressed by this Council.

It is also highly important to move forward with the work to abandon the death penalty all over the world. It is a brutal and vindictive travesty of justice which clearly does not belong in any modern system. It contravenes the very notion of human rights.

Still, we see it widely applied even today. Widely in Iran and much too much in Iraq. But more than 80 percent of the total number of executions in the world today takes place in China, where a shockingly high number of crimes can lead to the death penalty. This is certainly not in the Olympic spirit.

The risks of inadequate legal processes leading to the execution of innocent persons is particularly high in repressive regimes where the rule of the law does not apply. But even in democratic and law based societies, errors and non-discriminatory practices may never be fully ruled out.

The right of life must never be violated and the death penalty must be universally abolished.

Extrajudicial, summary and arbitrary executions also continue to be a problem in many parts of the world. I am particularly concerned by the situation in Sri Lanka. I call on the Council to adopt a draft resolution which urges the government of Sri Lanka to broaden the investigation into the increasing number of extrajudicial killings and disappearances, and to draw upon the office of the High Commissioner to aid the Government of Sri Lanka to ensure that the investigation will meet international standards.

It is important that the Council shapes its work in the best possible way in order to achieve real results where it counts – in the reality of those in exposed situations.

We should spend less time arguing about new legal instruments. Instead we must devote our full attention to implement the commitments we have already made.

We need to insure full implementation of human rights. This must include civil and political rights as well as economic, social and cultural rights. Without discrimination, be it on the basis of gender, sexual orientation or race.

This is – of course – a huge task. And can only be measured one way: Improvement on the ground. In areas ridden by conflict and poverty. In court rooms and prisons. In homes, class rooms, hospitals and work places. In the working conditions for the NGOs.

And it is in this context we wish to see Human Rights Council. It should promote implementation of HR instruments, constantly remind governments of their obligations and support them in their efforts to comply. It should follow-up on how States live up to their promises.

The first year is obviously crucial for the shaping of the Human Rights Council – and thus for its future standing in the international system.

We need to find consensus on many important issues.

We need to make sure that we preserve and strengthen the system of Special Procedures. Country specific mandates have proven indispensable as the “eyes and ears” of the international community.

We need to shape an efficient mechanism for Universal Periodic review. We must agree on an effective complaint mechanism and find new ways to use the expert function.

Building a new institution must be done by consensus. But the common objective must always be in sight. At the end of the day a fair and functioning Human Rights Council is in the interest of everybody.