



# General Assembly

Seventieth session

**53**<sup>rd</sup> plenary meeting  
Monday, 16 November 2015, 10 a.m.  
New York

Official Records

*President:* Mr. Lykketoft . . . . . (Denmark)

*In the absence of the President, Mr. Tommo Monthe (Cameroon), Vice-President, took the Chair.* (spoke in English)

*The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.*

## Agenda item 67

### Report of the Human Rights Council

#### Report of the Human Rights Council (A/70/53)

**The Acting President** (*spoke in French*): In connection with item 67, I recall that the General Assembly decided, at its 2nd plenary meeting, on 18 September, to consider agenda item 67 in plenary meeting and in the Third Committee, pursuant to resolution 65/281, of 17 June 2011.

In accordance with General Assembly resolution 65/281, of 17 June 2011, I now give the floor to Mr. Joachim R cker, President of the Human Rights Council.

**Mr. R cker** (Germany), President of the Human Rights Council: It is an honour to be here today to present the annual report of the Human Rights Council (A/70/53) to the General Assembly.

(*spoke in French*)

The Council is shocked by the horrendous terrorist attacks in Paris, Baghdad and Beirut. On behalf of the Council and on my own behalf, I wish to offer our sympathies to the families of the victims and the people of those countries. We stand united as men and women who are defending human rights.

Let me, at the outset, congratulate the newly elected members of the Council for the period 2016-2018 and wish them all a successful term. The General Assembly decided, in its resolution 60/251, that membership in the Human Rights Council is open to all States Members of the United Nations. Furthermore, the General Assembly decided that States shall take into account the contribution of candidates to the promotion and protection of human rights and their voluntary pledges and commitments made thereto. In that context, the Geneva community and I took note of the voluntary pledges made by some States. We also took note of the event on 15 July 2015 organized by Amnesty International and the International Service for Human Rights, with the co-sponsorship of the Permanent Missions of Botswana, Brazil and the Netherlands, in which some of the candidates participated. The General Assembly also decided that members elected to the Council shall uphold the highest standards in the promotion and protection of human rights, and fully cooperate with the Council. With regard to the latter, namely, cooperation with the Council, I call on all States, and in particular all States members of the Human Rights Council that have not yet done so, to issue standing invitations to the Council mechanisms.

The year 2015 marks the ninth year since the establishment of the Human Rights Council. As it enters its tenth year, the Council's record testifies to high responsiveness in dealing with human rights issues all over the world. The Human Rights Council has continued to be actively engaged in cases of urgent

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and chronic violations of human rights. In 2015, in addition to its regular sessions, one special session was held, along with an enhanced interactive dialogue on migration during the June session, and a new procedure for informal briefings with the High Commissioner for Human Rights was added to the Council's toolbox.

A total of 137 resolutions, decisions and President's statements were adopted in 2015, 84 of them without a vote. As President of the Human Rights Council, I believe that we should strive for as much consensus as possible and as much voting as necessary. Many of the resolutions, including on country issues, were cross-regional initiatives, affirming the resolve of the Council to take action on important human rights issues by overcoming different political positions. One such example is the resolution on promoting reconciliation, accountability and human rights in Sri Lanka, which was adopted in September by consensus and co-sponsored by Sri Lanka. Another is the resolution on the rights of the child, which is negotiated in Geneva during the March session.

Let me briefly summarize some of the Council's country-specific decisions that were taken in the course of the year. Syria has continued to be high on the agenda of the Council throughout the year, and the mandate of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic has been extended once again. The Commission of Inquiry, which presented its tenth report in September, once again documents gross human rights violations that are massive in extent and scope.

The Council also heard reports from the Commission of Inquiry on Eritrea and from the Special Rapporteur for the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. The Commission of Inquiry on Eritrea was set up to investigate systematic, widespread and grave violations of human rights with a view to ensuring full accountability, including where such violations may amount to crimes against humanity.

In April, the Council held a special session in the light of the terrorist attacks and human rights abuses and violations committed by the terrorist group Boko Haram. It requested the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights to work in close cooperation and consultation with States affected by acts perpetrated by the terrorist group Boko Haram and collect information from them in order to prepare a report on violations and abuses of human rights and atrocities committed

by the group, with a view to ensuring accountability. The Council also reaffirmed that the promotion and protection of human rights for all and the rule of law are essential in the fight against terrorism, and recognized that effective counter-terrorism measures and the protection of human rights can only be complementary and are mutually reinforcing.

The Independent Commission of Inquiry on the 2014 Gaza conflict presented its report in June and pointed to the possible commission of war crimes by both Israel and Palestinian armed groups and outlined a number of steps for the international community to take. In March, the High Commissioner was requested to urgently dispatch a mission to investigate violations and abuses of international human rights law committed in Libya since 2014. He was also asked to strengthen the presence of the Office for the High Commissioner for Refugees in Palestine. Another mission was mandated to monitor and report on the human rights situation in South Sudan with a view to ensuring accountability and complementarity with the African Union Commission of Inquiry. The Council also extended existing country-specific special procedures mandates — Special Rapporteurs and Independent Experts — on Belarus, Cambodia, the Central African Republic, Côte d'Ivoire, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Eritrea, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Mali, Myanmar, Somalia and the Sudan.

During its three most recent regular sessions, the Council has held, among other debates, a total of 17 panel discussions with panellists, including a variety of stakeholders, on themes such as the question of the death penalty, climate change, the rights of persons with disabilities, the state of racial discrimination worldwide, the rights of the child, equal enjoyment by every girl of the right to education, the effects of terrorism on the enjoyment of human rights, the rights of women, unilateral coercive measures, good governance in public service and the impact of the world drug problem on the enjoyment of human rights. The Council also held a panel on the situation of human rights in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. This year's high-level panel discussion on mainstreaming human rights focused on the enhancement of international cooperation in the field of human rights. In 2016, at its tenth anniversary, the mainstreaming panel, with heads and senior officials of United Nations agencies, will focus on the Sustainable Development Goals and human rights, with an emphasis on the right to development.

The Council also established two new special procedures mandates — one on the enjoyment of human rights by persons with albinism and the other on the right to privacy. All in all, there are now 56 mandates in total covering both country and thematic mandates. Former Secretary-General Kofi Annan once called them the crown jewels of the human rights system, and indeed, special procedures are the Council's and the international community's eyes and ears, as they monitor, report and advise on human rights issues throughout the world. As of 11 November, 114 Member States and one non-member observer State had extended a standing invitation to thematic special procedures. In line with resolution 60/251, I call on all States that have not yet done so to issue standing invitations to the special procedures mandate-holders and to fully cooperate with the Council's mechanisms, including by implementing their recommendations, in an effort to strengthen human rights worldwide.

The Council has also made progress on enhancing its functionality by, among other things, adopting a President's statement at the June session. The many discussions leading to that President's statement touched on many more aspects and showed the need not only to implement the statement, as a step forward, but also to continue discussing those matters. In that context, I also see a need for better cooperation and coordination between Geneva and New York, with a view to minimizing unnecessary duplication, being more resource-efficient and, ultimately, working together to strengthen the United Nations human rights system.

I am also pleased to inform the Assembly that we have continued to make the work of the Council accessible to persons with disabilities, pursuant to the legal obligations arising from the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and in line with the mandate given to the Council's task force on that issue. At every session of the Council, one panel was made accessible, in addition to the annual panel on the rights of persons with disabilities. At the most recent session of the Council in September, the panel discussion on a human rights-based approach to good governance in public service was made accessible through the provision of international sign-language interpretation, captioning and a webcast of those services. We remain committed, at the Council, to that issue through the task force that continues to report to us on progress, including best practices.

Allow me now to turn to comment, from my perspective, on the highly valuable and unique Universal Periodic Review (UPR) mechanism of the Human Rights Council. We are now getting closer to the end of the second cycle of that peer review mechanism, as well as to the beginning of the third. The UPR continues to get positive feedback from all actors involved. I would like to take this opportunity to highlight a number of positive trends that I had the privilege of witnessing over the course of the year. Of course, there are also challenges ahead that will require our attention and concerted action. The principle of the universality of the process continues to be preserved. All States scheduled for review came, and most of them came with delegations at the ministerial level. That demonstrates the commitment of all States to the Universal Periodic Review, which is of the utmost importance. Nevertheless, challenges remain and, in particular, those related to the participation and involvement of States that have no representation in Geneva or only a very small one. We are aware of that challenge, and the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights has put in place a variety of programmes and activities to address the needs of those States and to ensure their participation in the UPR.

Another important principle is that of periodicity, which offers the opportunity to measure progress. The focus must be on the implementation of recommendations. Ideally, therefore, national reports and presentations in the Working Group refer to the implementation of recommendations from the previous review cycle. That rightly reflects the cyclical nature of the reviews and the process involving presentations to the Working Group on the UPR in Geneva. Going forward, there is no doubt that that focus on follow-up and implementation, reporting on the impact and the changes on the ground, will need to be stressed much more. That will also help to safeguard the credibility of the mechanism.

In that regard, more and more States are, on a voluntary basis, either submitting mid-term reports, which take stock of the progress made, or using the framework provided by the Human Rights Council to share the progress made and challenges faced in the implementation of the recommendations. States are also increasingly strengthening their national processes and systems so as to enable a more systematic engagement with and follow-up to the recommendations from the human rights mechanisms, including the

Universal Periodic Review. That approach is also highly encouraging and should be further pursued. I am pleased to note that, in comparison with the first cycle, bilateral matters tend to be less present in the reviews. I welcome the self-restraint exerted by the States concerned, thereby contributing to preserving the constructive, consensual and non-politicized nature of the Universal Periodic Review.

I would like to turn to an issue of concern that transcends the review and concerns the work of the Council in general, which is the protection of the role of civil society in our work. The active participation and contribution of civil-society organizations and national human rights institutions are central to the work of the Human Rights Council and its mechanisms, and they contribute to making it a unique forum among other United Nations intergovernmental organs. Civil society, human rights defenders, non-governmental organizations and national institutions for the promotion and protection of human rights not only contribute to our discussions, but they also make us more effective and provide us with a mirror image of the realities on the ground. And in that regard, civil society is not just something that is nice to have: it is at the core of our work and at the core of human rights.

It is therefore essential that representatives of civil society be able to operate in a free, open and safe environment that protects and promotes their own human rights. Over the course of the year, I have been apprised and seized of alleged and verified cases of intimidation, threats and reprisals against individuals from civil-society organizations, national human rights institutions and even special-procedures mandate-holders. Many of those cases are also documented in the report of the Secretary-General on cooperation with the United Nations, its representatives and mechanisms in the field of human rights (A/HRC/30/29), which is presented annually in September to the Human Rights Council.

I have repeatedly appealed to the Council to ensure the safe participation and involvement of civil society in our work and, where required, I have followed up directly with the States concerned. I would like once again to reiterate that, without the contribution of civil society, the work of the Council, the Universal Periodic Review and other mechanisms would be much less effective. The participation of civil society should be preserved, and individuals working with civil society organizations should be protected from intimidation of any type.

In that context, I would also like to stress the need to implement Human Rights Council resolution 24/24, on cooperation with the United Nations. The Council decided in 2013 to establish a focal point on reprisals and intimidation in the context of cooperation with the United Nations, a topic that, at the time, was also being considered by the General Assembly. As President of the Council, I am pleased to note that that item is now closed and that subsequently States from all regions expressed their support for the prompt implementation of Council resolution 24/24. That brings me to a point that I wish to underline. While the Council is undoubtedly *de jure* a subsidiary body of the General Assembly, we trust that our decisions are respected and, in the form of our annual report, acknowledged *in toto*.

Let me briefly turn to another subject, namely, the welcome and increased participation of the least developed countries (LDCs) and small island developing States (SIDS) in the work of the Human Rights Council. In that regard, the Voluntary Technical Assistance Trust Fund to Support the Participation of LDCs and SIDS in the work of the Human Rights Council has been crucial. We all recognize that the Fund is a great asset, not only for the beneficiary countries but also for the work of the Council.

As in the past, the Human Rights Council made a series of recommendations to the General Assembly, which I will present in a more detailed way in my presentation to the Third Committee this afternoon. For instance, the resolution adopted on the human rights situation in Syria at our thirtieth session recommends that the General Assembly should submit the reports of the International Independent Commission of Inquiry on Syria to the Security Council for appropriate action. Furthermore, the Council requested the General Assembly to consider holding a high-level segment on the right to development during the general debate at its seventy-first session.

In view of the upcoming fifteenth anniversary of the adoption of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action, the Council also requested the General Assembly, in its resolution 30/16, to dedicate a theme at the high-level segment of the seventy-first session to the full and effective implementation of the Declaration and Programme of Action, including, among other things, the universal ratification of the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination. Furthermore, the Secretary-General was requested, through the General Assembly, to



review and rescind the mandate of the independent eminent experts for the successful implementation of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action and, in lieu of that mandate, to establish a forum on people of African descent.

This year, the Council also mandated a panel discussion on the progress made and challenges in addressing human rights issues in the context of efforts to end the HIV/AIDS epidemic by 2030. The report of that discussion will be brought to the attention of the General Assembly ahead of the high-level meeting on HIV/AIDS in 2016. Finally, the Council recommended that the General Assembly designate 9 December as the International Day of Commemoration and Dignity of the Victims of Genocide.

Since our Fifth Committee colleagues are today discussing the budget for human rights activities, I would like to touch on the significant challenges facing the Human Rights Council in terms of resources. As I said earlier, the Council continues to adopt a high number of resolutions and decisions with significant resource implications. Resources are also of great importance for the work of the Office of the High Commissioner of Human Rights with regard to capacity-building and technical cooperation. Unfortunately, the regular budget has not kept pace with that growth. For example, the High Commissioner and his Office often have to rely on voluntary contributions in order to implement mandated activities. However, a strong and independent High Commissioner and Office are and will continue to be in our common interest. I would therefore like to seek cooperation and support from all Member States to address that issue through the Fifth Committee, by positively considering options on how to address the funding gap, including with regard to new mandates arising from resolutions and decisions of the Council.

I have held the presidency since January 2015 and will conclude my term at the end of this year. On 7 December, the Council is expected to hold its organizational meeting to appoint the new Bureau for the tenth cycle. The presidency from January 2016 onwards will come from the Group of Asia-Pacific States. Throughout its existence for the past nine years, the Council has proved able to devise new formats and modalities for addressing human rights issues of concern. That was also the case this year. During the June session, the Council held an enhanced interactive dialogue on the human rights of migrants and a dialogue on the current status of negotiations on the

post-2015 development agenda with regard to human rights. Informal conversations on topical issues were organized, outside Council sessions, with the incoming Chair of the Third Committee, the Deputy Secretary-General and the High Commissioner. Those formats, along with the regular updates at the beginning of each Council session by the High Commissioner on developments in the world and the numerous reports presented by his Office, have fruitfully contributed to the Council's deliberations during the calendar year.

In conclusion, I wish to assure members of my commitment to seeing a successful transition of the Presidency. I trust that the General Assembly will continue to provide its full support to the Council. On behalf of my successor, I would like to welcome all members to the thirty-first session of the Council in March 2015. Finally, I would like to echo the words of former Secretary-General Kofi Annan:

“We will not enjoy development without security, we will not enjoy security without development, and we will not enjoy either without respect for human rights”.

We should — in the seventieth year of the United Nations — wholeheartedly endorse those three pillars of the United Nations in all our work, and we should work to strengthen the human rights system.

**Mr. Dehghani** (Islamic Republic of Iran): On behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM), I would like to express the Movement's sympathy to the families of the victims of the attacks committed by Daesh terrorist groups during the past 10 days in Paris, Beirut and Baghdad. The Movement strongly condemns those terrorist attacks and extends its condolences to the Governments and the people of France, Lebanon and Iraq. Those terrorist attacks prove once again that terrorism and violent extremism are global threats and that combating them requires global cooperation.

The Movement of Non-Aligned Countries reaffirms that democracy, development and respect for all human rights and freedoms are interdependent and mutually reinforcing. The international community should support the strengthening and promotion of democracy, development and respect for all human rights and fundamental freedoms in the entire world, without distinction between developed and developing countries. In that regard, we recall the commitments made by the Heads of States and Government during the various summits of the Non-Aligned Movement.

We also reaffirm that all human rights, in particular the right to development, are universal, inalienable, interdependent, indivisible and interrelated, and that human rights issues must be addressed within the global context through a constructive, non-confrontational, non-politicized, non-selective, impartial, transparent and dialogue-based approach. They should also be addressed in a fair and equitable manner, with objectivity and respect for all of the principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations. They include respect for the guiding principles of national sovereignty, territorial integrity, non-interference in the internal affairs of States, and the right to self-determination of all peoples under foreign occupation and colonial or alien domination, while also considering the political, historical, social, religious and cultural particularities of each country.

The Movement stresses the need to preserve the positive developments achieved since the establishment of the Human Rights Council in the context of its work, including its institution-building package. Furthermore, NAM reaffirms the need to ensure that human rights are not used for political purposes, for adopting politically motivated decisions or for avoiding dealing with the problems that plagued the former United Nations Commission on Human Rights. The Movement also recalls General Assembly resolution 62/155, which in its paragraph 11

“[u]rges all actors on the international scene to build an international order based on inclusion, justice, equality and equity, human dignity, mutual understanding and promotion of and respect for cultural diversity and universal human rights, and to reject all doctrines of exclusion based on racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance”.

The Movement emphasizes the role of the Human Rights Council as a subsidiary body of the General Assembly that is responsible for considering human rights situations in all countries in the context of the Universal Periodic Review and in a spirit of cooperation and constructive dialogue. In that regard, the Movement expresses its deep concern at the continuing and expanding practice involving the selective adoption of country-specific resolutions in the Human Rights Council. That practice exploits human rights for political purposes and contravenes the principles of universality, objectivity and non-selectivity in addressing human rights issues, which undermines

cooperation as an essential principle in the effective promotion and protection of all universally recognized human rights.

In conclusion, the Movement calls on all States members of the Human Rights Council to promote international cooperation and constructive dialogue in the Council, and to prevent the application of double standards, selectivity and political manipulation, which discredited the United Nations Commission on Human Rights.

**Mr. Minah** (Sierra Leone): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the Group of African States. At the outset, let me say that our thoughts and prayers are with the citizens of Paris and Beirut in connection with the recent terrorist atrocities. We pray for all those who continue to suffer from terrorist acts around the world.

I welcome the President of the Human Rights Council, Mr. Joachim R cker, Permanent Representative of Germany to the United Nations in Geneva, and also thank him for the introductory remarks that he made during his presentation of the annual report of the Human Rights Council to the General Assembly (A/70/53). The African Group thanks Ambassador R cker for his work since 1 January 2015 and for the level of professionalism and engagement that he has continuously maintained. In that regard, the African Group would like to make the following points on the work of the Human Rights Council since its previous annual report.

As it approaches the tenth anniversary of its creation, the Human Rights Council continues to fulfil its mandate as a subsidiary body of the General Assembly in a promising manner and in accordance with resolution 60/251 and as further elaborated and framed in the Council’s resolution 5/1, entitled “Institution-building of the Human Rights Council”. The Council continues to expand its work and activities, which underscores the need for comprehensive rationalization so as to ensure efficiency and effectiveness.

The African Group appreciates the efforts of the incumbent President of the Council to address the areas with the potential to increase the efficiency of the Council’s work. In that regard, we welcome the adoption of the statement by the President of the Human Rights Council on enhancing the efficiency of the Human Rights Council (A/HRC/PRST/29/1) and the subsequent follow-up decision (A/HRC/DEC/30/115). We emphasize that any proposals for consolidating

the working methods or increasing efficiency should be made within the established parameters of the institution-building package (Human Rights Council resolution 5/1), the outcome of the review, the rules of procedure and the existing modalities of work. We also reiterate that the Bureau of the Human Rights Council should be guided by and must work within the framework outlined in paragraph 114 of the institution-building package, which clarifies that the Bureau's role should be confined to organizational and procedural matters.

We express our concern over a number of attempts to depart from the institution-building package or to initiate a de facto review. We believe that those attempts can have grave and negative consequences for the credibility and future of the Human Rights Council. The same concerns also apply to the disconcerting attempts to question the status of the Human Rights Council as a subsidiary body of the General Assembly, or to reopen the discussion on previously settled key institutional questions.

As we approach the thirtieth anniversary of the adoption of the United Nations Declaration on the Right to Development (resolution 41/128) in 2016, we note with great concern the continued impasse in the intergovernmental Working Group on the Right to Development and the repeated resistance to pursuing the normative elaboration of the definition of that right. Sadly, that is hampering the serious work needed to ensure that that important right becomes a concrete and tangible reality for everyone, particularly the world's poor.

The African Group welcomes the recommendation of the Human Rights Council that requests the High Commissioner, as part of the activities to commemorate the thirtieth anniversary of the Council, to seek the views of members in preparing a paper on the realization and implementation of the right to development, as elaborated in the United Nations Declaration on the Right to Development. It also welcomes the decision to submit that paper to the Working Group on the Right to Development for consideration at its seventeenth session, and it requests that the General Assembly consider holding a high-level segment on the right to development during the general debate at its seventy-first session.

During the period covered by the report, the African Group within the Human Rights Council continued to assume its active and constructive role,

including focusing the spotlight on a number of issues and priorities to which it attaches particular importance. The African Group maintains its leadership on a range of issues, including the elimination of female genital mutilation, the impact of toxic waste on human rights and the effects of the non-repatriation of illicit funds on the enjoyment of human rights.

As a backdrop to the growing number of instances of racial violence and hatred in various regions of the world, the African Group remains at the forefront of the fight against racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and other forms of related intolerance through its presentation of ambitious and practical resolutions aimed at the full implementation of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action.

In that context, we must highlight the fact that the African Group has been very supportive and engaged with item 10 of the programme of work of the Human Rights Council, entitled "Technical assistance and capacity-building". The African States comprise two thirds of the beneficiaries of that agenda item, and that is an indicator of the degree of openness that Africa maintains towards promoting technical cooperation and capacity-building in the field of human rights. We take this opportunity to ensure that item 10 will remain a platform for technical cooperation and capacity-building. It should not be used for other objectives, such as monitoring or investigation. Advisory services on human rights issues should be implemented only at the request of the State concerned, based on its priorities, national ownership and with full respect for the State's sovereignty and political independence.

We are very encouraged that the Human Rights Council remains seized of the issue of the protection of the family. More than 20 years after the International Year of the Family, protection and support for the family as a natural and fundamental unit of society remain largely overlooked, although they represent an uncontested obligation under international human rights law. The African Group welcomes the adoption of Human Rights Council resolution 29/22 and looks forward to the report on the impact of the fulfilment of States' obligations under international human rights law regarding the protection of the family to be submitted to the thirty-first session of the Council.

We take note of the fact that the Human Rights Council held an enhanced interactive dialogue during its June session on the human rights of migrants.

Nevertheless, the grave situation witnessed by migrants, refugees and asylum-seekers invites further work and efforts by the Council in that regard, particularly concerning the impact of migration and border-control policies on the safety, dignity and human rights of migrants and refugees. The African Group reiterates its commitment to continued support for the work of the Human Rights Council as a subsidiary body of the General Assembly and its role in supporting the protection and promotion of human rights globally.

The African Group is convinced that the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) remains the most distinctive mechanism of universal application for assisting States in fulfilling their human rights obligations. In our view, the mechanism remains relevant to the promotion and protection of human rights. The Group would like to reaffirm the need to preserve the mechanism's cooperative nature and the principle of dialogue. The Group firmly believes that it is critical that the Voluntary Fund for Financial and Technical Assistance for the implementation of UPR recommendations be properly used for the purpose of assisting States develop national capacity and expertise for the implementation of the accepted recommendations.

While the African Group reiterates its support for the mechanisms and the special procedures of the Council and the important work that it undertakes in the promotion and protection of human rights, the Group believes that there is a need for such mechanisms and special procedures to be streamlined in order for them to be more effective. The Group would like to emphasize the need for the procedures to comply with the institution-building package, the code of conduct for mandate-holders and the terms of reference of their respective mandates.

The African Group reiterates its strong concern over attempts to impose new notions and concepts, such as sexual orientation and gender identity, which are not referenced in international human rights law, and strongly rejects any attempts to undermine the international human rights system by seeking to impose concepts pertaining to social matters, including private individual conduct, that fall outside the internationally agreed human rights legal framework. Focusing on notions on which there is no international agreement, definition or consensus will serve only to divide the Human Rights Council and undermine its balanced and egalitarian approach to the promotion and protection of human rights for all.

The Group therefore observes with regret that concepts not universally agreed on are given attention to the detriment of issues of paramount importance, such as the right to development and the racism agenda. Our alarm stems not only from concerns about the lack of legal grounds or the fact that such concepts delve into matters that essentially fall within the domestic jurisdiction of States, but from the fact that such attempts also run counter to the Charter of the United Nations, which calls for respect for the sovereignty of States and the principle of non-intervention. We believe that people are not inherently vulnerable, but that some individuals and groups find themselves in vulnerable situations owing to a number of factors. Such factors include the socioeconomic environment in which they live. We strongly deplore all forms of stereotyping, stigmatization, prejudice, intolerance, discrimination and violence directed against peoples, communities and individuals on any grounds whatsoever, wherever they may occur. We call on all Member States to refrain from attempting to give priority to the rights of certain individuals, which could result in negative discrimination at the expense of the other internationally agreed rights.

In conclusion, the African Group is convinced that the principles underpinning the creation of the Human Rights Council, as outlined in resolution 60/251, remain of utmost importance and relevance. The Human Rights Council, in undertaking its mandate aimed at promoting universal respect for the protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms without distinction, should continue to base its activities on the principles of non-politicization, non-selectivity, objectivity, universality, the elimination of double standards and international cooperation in addressing human rights issues. The Human Rights Council should also remain committed to the principles of interrelatedness, interdependence and the indivisibility of all human rights, including the right to development, bearing in mind that all human rights should receive equal and fair treatment.

**The Acting President:** I now give the floor to the observer of the European Union.

**Mr. Vrailas** (European Union) (*spoke in French*): At the outset, allow me to turn to my French colleagues and friends to express how deeply shocked and saddened we are by the terror attacks in Paris. France is a great and strong nation. Its values of freedom, equality and brotherhood have inspired and continue



to inspire the European Union (EU). Today, we stand united with the Government and the people of France. I also wish to extend sincere condolences to the other countries whose nationals were also among the victims of the terrorist attacks and to our colleagues in Iraq and Lebanon regarding the attacks on the capitals of those countries last week. We must recognize that such attacks are attacks on us all.

This is, regrettably, the second time this year that I am addressing the Assembly just after a terrorist attack. The first occurred in January in Paris. At that time, I spoke about upholding the right to the freedom of expression, even when an opinion given could hurt, anger or insult someone else. What freedoms are we defending today? Is it the right to attend a football match, listen to music, go for a walk or to a restaurant? Of what crimes were the victims of last week's attacks guilty?

It is for that reason that we must spare no effort and work together to ensure that such reprehensible acts do not achieve their goal of creating divisions and sowing fear and hatred. We must face the threat together, with all the means necessary and with unwavering determination. We urgently need to understand the threat posed and ensure that the Charter of the United Nations and the values, ideals and principles therein guide the way. Good always overcomes evil, and we must make every effort to ensure that that remains true.

*(spoke in English)*

I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union. The candidate countries Turkey, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro and Albania; the country of the Stabilization and Association Process and potential candidate Bosnia and Herzegovina; the European Free Trade Association country Iceland, member of the European Economic Area; as well as Ukraine, the Republic of Moldova and Georgia, align themselves with this statement.

The European Union would like to thank the President of the Human Rights Council, Joachim R cker, for presenting the Council's tenth annual report to the General Assembly (A/70/53). We also appreciate the opportunity to engage in an interactive dialogue with the President of the Council in the Third Committee in order to strengthen the links between the Council and the wider United Nations membership in New York.

Since the establishment of the Human Rights Council, the European Union has been a strong supporter of that body. We would like to reaffirm our continued support today. Being the only United Nations body that is purely devoted to supporting the promotion and protection of all human rights, the Council has strengthened the ability of the United Nations to help ensure that all persons can enjoy their human rights and that violations thereof are disclosed. We attach great importance to both the credibility and the effectiveness of the Council, and will continue to make every effort to ensure that it is not only able to address violations and abuses of human rights, including gross and systematic violations and abuses, and respond promptly to human rights emergencies, but also to improve human rights standards and their implementation worldwide through systematic work on relevant thematic issues. In that context, we strongly oppose any attempts to undermine the institutional position of the Council within the United Nations system, and the European Union stresses the importance of its independence.

The European Union welcomes the central role played by the Human Rights Council in addressing human rights situations throughout the world. The severe consequences of the crisis in Syria and the violations committed by the Al-Assad regime cannot be ignored by any State, and the conflict's effects have also become blatantly visible in the region and beyond. In that context, the Council's ongoing response to the crisis remains critically important. The Council has also demonstrated its commitment to providing technical assistance and capacity-building to the Governments of C te d'Ivoire, Iraq, Libya and Mali in order to promote human rights, and we welcome the continued support that has been rendered to the occupied Palestinian territories, including East Jerusalem, the Republic of Guinea, South Sudan and Ukraine. We trust that the Council will continue to closely monitor situations where technical assistance and capacity-building can make a difference, and will take action where necessary.

On 28 October, the General Assembly elected 18 new members of the Council. Serving as a Council member entails important responsibilities; resolution 60/251 provides that members elected to the Council shall uphold the highest standards in the promotion and protection of human rights. While we congratulate the new members, we also encourage all to pay careful attention to the human rights records and commitments of States throughout their membership.

The European Union highly values the work of the special procedures. They play a crucial role in advancing the human rights agenda. All EU member States have extended a standing invitation to the special-procedures mandate-holders, and the European Union calls on all States Members of the United Nations to do likewise and to actively cooperate with them. In order to enable them to fully carry out their mandates, it is crucial that they be able to independently assess and draw the Council's attention to human rights issues and situations. In that regard, the EU also welcomes the growing participation of mandate-holders in the Council's work.

Given the situation in the countries concerned, the European Union welcomes the extensions of the country-specific mandates of the Special Rapporteurs on the situation of human rights in Myanmar, Iran, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Cambodia and Belarus. We also welcome the extension of the mandates of the Independent Experts on the situation of human rights in Haiti, the Central African Republic and Mali. We also note the first report (A/HRC/29/42) of the commission of inquiry on human rights in Eritrea. Finally, we welcome the consensus Human Rights Council resolution 30/1, on Sri Lanka, an important step in pursuing reconciliation and accountability there.

Thematic special procedures play an equally important role through their research, country-specific visits and valuable contributions to the better understanding of the content of specific human rights. Among the many thematic special procedures, the European Union would like to highlight the mandate of the Special Rapporteur on the freedom of religion or belief, who plays an active role in identifying existing and emerging obstacles to the enjoyment of the right to the freedom of religion or belief and in presenting recommendations to overcome such obstacles. Moreover, we also want to draw attention to the newly established mandate of the Independent Expert on the enjoyment of human rights by persons with albinism and the mandate on the right to privacy in the digital age. We wish them success and reiterate our support to their mandates.

The European Union remains strongly committed to the Universal Periodic Review (UPR), a truly universal and unique mechanism within the United Nations, addressing all human rights and applicable to all Member States without distinction or discrimination. Ultimately, however, the quality of the recommendations

and the commitment to implementing them are key to the outcome of that process. The equal treatment of all countries is an underlying element of the UPR mechanism and should be maintained throughout each cycle.

The European Union reiterates its strongest condemnation of the acts of reprisal and intimidation of civil-society representatives attending the Human Rights Council and cooperating with human rights mechanisms and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. Following the decision of the General Assembly at its sixty-ninth session not to defer consideration of Human Rights Council resolution 24/24, we call on the Secretary-General to appoint a focal point for reprisals, taking into consideration the concerns raised by some States on some of the provisions in the resolution. That was the will of a cross-regional group of 56 States, including the 28 EU member States, expressed in a joint statement during the thirtieth session of the Council. We remain ready to engage with all Member States to identify a solution to the issue. Contributions by civil-society organizations and national human rights institutions are extremely valuable to the work of the Council. Their ability to interact with the Council must be preserved.

In conclusion, let me reiterate our ongoing commitment to contributing to the work of the Human Rights Council and to further strengthening its role in the protection and development of international human rights law. We will continue to systematically uphold and ensure the implementation of existing international norms and standards, strongly advocate for the universality of human rights and promote the observance by all States of all human rights and fundamental freedoms.

**Mr. Zagaynov** (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): The tragedy in Paris is yet another example of the savagery of the terrorism that is threatening human civilization. In Lebanon and Iraq, terrorist attacks have also claimed the lives of many people in recent days. Our country is among those that have experienced the horror of international terrorism at first hand. We join others in expressing our condolences and once again state the need to decisively and cohesively combat that heinous scourge, which knows no nationality, religion or borders. Terrorism violates human rights, including the most basic of them — the right to life. To effectively combat that evil, we must truly bring together the efforts of the entire international community.

We thank Mr. Rücker for presenting the report on the work of the United Nations Human Rights Council in 2015 (A/70/53). We also congratulate the representatives of the 18 countries elected on 28 October to the Human Rights Council.

We view the Council as a key component of the universal system for promoting and protecting human rights. It is designed to promote the development of constructive intergovernmental dialogue on human rights. Russia actively participates in the Council's work, cooperating with all interested States, as well as with the special-procedures mandate-holders of the Human Rights Council and the Universal Periodic Review mechanism. We will continue to strengthen the activity of the Council, in accordance with the principle of respectful and depoliticized cooperation, which is the only effective way to achieve the goal of universal respect for human rights.

This year, the Council addressed a wide range of issues. It is important that the Council's resolutions, its President's statements and joint country statements addressed such topics as the seventieth anniversary of the end of the Second World War, the protection of Christians, the protection of the family and the fiftieth anniversary of the adoption and fortieth anniversary of the entry into force of the International Covenants on Human Rights.

At the same time, in our opinion, there are many other issues that require the urgent attention of the Council, including violations of the rights of national minorities and the phenomenon of mass statelessness on the European continent. Against a backdrop of incomprehensible phobias, several States have started repressing all dissent by bringing pressure to bear on the media, closing television channels and blacklisting journalists. The Council must focus its attention on the negative practice of the use of extraterritoriality to shirk international human rights responsibilities. More attention should be paid to ensuring social, economic and cultural rights, the promotion of the right to development and to strengthening the system of international legal guarantees of non-interference in private and family life.

Unfortunately, the Human Rights Council is not doing enough to combat racism, racial discrimination, aggressive nationalism, xenophobia and related intolerance or the glorification of Nazism and the spread of radical ideologies of hatred. We believe that the

Council must give significantly more attention to those issues and that States should adopt a more constructive approach to their consideration. We are particularly concerned about the growing politicization of the work of the Human Rights Council and the polarization of its members' interests. The ongoing efforts of several countries to act as mentors is not conducive to the creation of an atmosphere of constructive cooperation in the Council, which is necessary for its effective work. As a result, it is significantly more difficult for the Council to hold focused and objective discussions on current issues on the international human rights agenda.

It is well understood that the primary responsibility for the promotion and protection of human rights lies with States, while the task of the international community is to assist them in that endeavour. We believe that the human rights situation in certain countries should be examined in the Council with a view to those countries receiving advisory services, technical assistance or capacity-building. At the same time, we must strictly adhere to the basic principle that technical assistance, first and foremost, must be provided only at the request of the State concerned. We believe that the work of the Council in the area of technical assistance must be in line with the requirements of neutrality, impartiality and independence.

Russia supports the Universal Periodic Review mechanism, which, in our opinion, is the only objective international human rights monitoring mechanism. We would like to urge all States that have already completed or will complete this process in future to work in a spirit of openness, voluntary cooperation and willingness to engage in dialogue. They should not avoid taking on commitments to implement the recommendations and should take responsibility for their implementation. Owing to the increase in recent years in the number of the Council's special procedures, we must focus on eliminating the duplication of efforts and on strictly abiding by the mandates assigned to the procedures and by the code of conduct.

In conclusion, we would like to again encourage States and other interested parties to avoid any further politicization or geographical or thematic distortion of the Council's work and not to use the Council to solve problems that are unrelated to its mandates. We call on all concerned to work with the Council in a spirit of equal and mutually respectful and constructive cooperation. We are ready to contribute to this work.

**Mr. Ndong Ella** (Gabon) (*spoke in French*): My delegation associates itself with the statement made by the Permanent Representative of Sierra Leone on behalf of the Group of African States.

At the outset, I should like, on behalf of my country and my own behalf, to express my sincere condolences to France and the French people, especially the families of the victims, following the savage attacks committed in Paris, Île-de-France, on Friday. Gabon strongly condemns those despicable acts of another age, which absolutely nothing can justify.

I welcome the presence in the Hall of Mr. Joachim Rucker, Permanent Representative of the Federal Republic of Germany to the United Nations Office at Geneva and President of the Human Rights Council. I want to thank him for the relevant information he has kindly provided to us on the Council's activities and congratulate him on the excellent work he has carried out at the head of the Council at a time when the world is facing multiple crises, which often cause multifaceted human rights violations.

Since I had the privilege of presiding over the important Human Rights Council on behalf of my country, Gabon, I understand the scope and complexity of the tasks assigned to him, and I can fully appreciate his activities and initiatives aimed at enhancing the credibility and effectiveness of the Council in continuing the efforts of his predecessors. I welcome the special attention he has given to strengthening the synergy that must exist between Geneva and New York when addressing the issues and concerns related to the promotion and protection of human rights throughout the world. That synergy is all the more necessary as it can serve as a foundation for greater coordination in the implementation of the promotion and protection of human rights.

Gabon believes that respect for human rights and the dignity of the human person is a prerequisite for harmonious development, based on the well-being of all people, regardless of gender, religion, political opinion, ethnicity and social status. As the Assembly well knows, the dignity of the human person exists regardless of whether or not it is recognized. My delegation encourages the Human Rights Council to remain seized of situations that threaten the exercise and enjoyment of human rights, such as discrimination in all its forms and in particular racial discrimination, xenophobia and discrimination against women.

Gabon has been closely following the Council's consideration of current issues and situations, such as those related to private life in the age of digital technology, family, sustainable development, migration and climate change. My delegation encourages the Council to strengthen its efforts in the field of technical assistance and capacity-building in human rights. The countries listed in the Council's agenda as needing such strengthening must be supported with a view to enabling them to eventually improve their human rights situations. To that end, my delegation welcomes the proposals of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights to increase the number of staff in the field.

My country's Government, in line with the vision of His Excellency Mr. Ali Bongo Ondimba, President of the Republic and Head of State, who wants to make Gabon an emerging country by 2025, regards the promotion and protection of human rights as an ongoing endeavour that requires the involvement of all stakeholders and the strong cooperation of our States, together with all United Nations human rights mechanisms, in particular the Council. Gabon, an original member of the Council since its establishment in 2006, has always complied with the requirements of those mechanisms. We encourage other States to do the same.

The reform of the working methods of the Human Rights Council is particularly meaningful today, as we will celebrate the tenth anniversary of its establishment next year, in 2016. This reform process could begin with a review of the Council's agenda, which has become somewhat congested over the years. Other aspects that also might receive attention include the human rights dimension in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (resolution 70/1), which brings hope to developing countries that face many challenges. As the thirtieth anniversary of the adoption of the Declaration on the Right to Development (resolution 41/128) approaches in 2016, Gabon expresses its support for the intergovernmental Working Group on the Right to Development and hopes that it will fully carry out its mandate.

In conclusion, I wish to reaffirm my country's support for the activities of the Human Rights Council, in accordance with resolution 65/251. The promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms must take into account the principles of objectivity, universality, non-politicization, non-selectivity and



indivisibility, which are the basis for the values of humanism, solidarity, social justice and respect for life and human dignity.

**Ms. Wilson** (Australia): I would like to start by acknowledging the horrific attacks in Paris last Friday night, just days after the tragic attacks in Beirut and Baghdad. We offer our deep condolences to the families of those killed, and strongly condemn such acts of terror.

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights remains the cornerstone of the international community's human rights framework. Australia was a founding Member of the United Nations, and since the 1940s has consistently supported the central role of human rights as enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations. We commend the Human Rights Council for its important work in promoting and protecting all human rights, and we have actively engaged with the Council as a non-member since its establishment in 2006. We also participate constructively in the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) process, which we consider to be a critical element of the United Nations human rights machinery and of our own human rights advocacy. Last Monday, Australia was reviewed by 104 United Nations Members as part of our second cycle UPR. We take the Universal Periodic Review seriously and will over the next few months genuinely consider each recommendation.

We remain a champion of the promotion and protection of human international rights. Australia's Foreign Minister has announced our candidacy for membership in the Human Rights Council for a two-year term from 2018 to 2020, the first time Australia has sought a seat on the Council.

Australia continues to focus on five pillars in the human rights field: advancing the rights of women and girls; promoting good governance and strong democratic institutions everywhere; promoting and protecting freedom of expression; advancing the rights of indigenous peoples; and promoting strong national human rights institutions and capacity-building. Those pillars reflect our priorities at home and abroad. They are issues for which we have long been an advocate domestically, in our international human rights engagements and through our aid programme commitments.

As home to one of the world's oldest continuous civilizations, we are proud of the culture and heritage

of Australia's first peoples. Consistent with our indigenous peoples strategy, Australia is committed to giving practical effect to the outcome document of the World Conference on Indigenous Peoples (resolution 69/2) and the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. We engage in Human Rights Council resolutions on the rights of indigenous peoples and look forward to considering how the Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples can be strengthened.

Internationally, we give high priority to advancing the rights of women and girls and have placed gender equality and women's empowerment at the centre of our aid programme. We are committed to working collaboratively with other States to achieve equality before the law for women and girls, reduce violence against women and promote gender equality.

Australia's leadership promotes strong, effective and independent national human rights institutions, the independence of judges and lawyers, good governance with respective groups, and the responsibility to protect. Australia is also a strong advocate for the global abolition of the death penalty. We continue to encourage States to move away from this inhumane form of punishment. Australia has long emphasized that there is no evidence of its value as a deterrent and that any miscarriage of its use is irreversible. In that regard, we were pleased to see the Human Rights Council adopt resolution 30/5, on the death penalty.

Australia will continue to support efforts to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the work of the Human Rights Council, including through the biennialization of resolutions and enhanced coordination between New York and Geneva. We also continue to value the important role that the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights plays in facilitating the work of the Council, assisting special procedures and providing technical assistance and capacity-building. Australia strongly supports the independence of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights and the work it does in the field, particularly in our region.

**Mr. Wenaweser** (Liechtenstein): Like others, I would like to express our deepest sympathy for the victims of the terrorist attacks in Paris last Friday. We stand in full solidarity with the Government and the people of France, as well as with other Governments that have recently been affected by terrorist attacks, particularly those of Lebanon and Iraq.

I would like to thank the President of the Human Rights Council for presenting its annual report (A/70/53). A dynamic relationship between the Council and the General Assembly, since both organs are entrusted with the promotion and protection of human rights, is highly important. Regular communication and coordination are thus essential. We appreciate President Rucker's regular visits to New York and hope that his successor will follow his example. My comments today will focus on some of the Council's most important achievements during the reporting period.

The Council's decision to support national accountability efforts in Sri Lanka for crimes committed during the civil war was an important signal for survivors there. It also illustrated the Council's role in promoting accountability for gross and systematic human rights violations, particularly when carried out as attacks on civilian populations. National judiciaries always have the primary responsibility to investigate and prosecute. International criminal justice, particularly in the form of the International Criminal Court, comes into play only when domestic efforts fail or are not even attempted. The proposed hybrid mechanism, under national leadership but with an international component, requires a strong commitment on the part of the Government of Sri Lanka to bringing justice to the victims of the war and strengthening its judiciary in a sustainable manner. It also requires the continued engagement of the Human Rights Council, since this will be a lengthy and possibly difficult process. In that regard, we would like to commend the leadership displayed on the issue by High Commissioner Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein.

Accountability for the worst types of crimes under international law is important, but we should never delude ourselves into believing that there can be genuine compensation for such crimes. Preventing them from occurring in the first place is our real duty and challenge. We therefore welcome the fact that 106 States have subscribed to the code of conduct regarding Security Council action against genocide, crimes against humanity, or war crimes. We look forward to seeing more States make this important political commitment, which we will use as a yardstick in deciding which countries we would like to see serve on the Security Council and also on the Human Rights Council. The code of conduct is now also ready to be applied with respect to Burundi, which will be its first major challenge. In that respect, we welcome the

Security Council's consensus adoption of resolution 2248 (2015) on the situation in that country.

In July, the Human Rights Council appointed the first-ever Special Rapporteur on the right to privacy. Safeguarding privacy in the digital era is one of the big human rights challenges of our time. It is also an area where the Human Rights Council can have a real impact, in particular by helping to clarify where to draw the line for States that interfere with the right to privacy. Clearly, the mere fact that the rapid development of information and communications technology has made it easier than ever to collect personal data is not sufficient reason to lower our standards of protection. Digital surveillance can play a useful role in law enforcement, but it must at all times respect proportionality and be subject to judicial review, including remedies for affected individuals. That should also be a key message for the review of the outcome document of the World Summit on the Information Society Forum and its implementation. Human rights must be protected online and offline. The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights requires that we extend such protection, without discrimination based on nationality or citizenship, and that States respect those rights and not interfere with them, whether in their own territory, abroad or in cyberspace.

The Council has continued to make progress on the question of the death penalty. In particular, the recently adopted Human Rights Council resolution 30/5 addresses the relationship between the death penalty and the absolute prohibition of torture and of inhuman, degrading or cruel treatment or punishment. On that question, in the Human Rights Council report of 16 July 2015, the Secretary-General clearly states:

“In the light of the evolution of international human rights law and jurisprudence and State practice, the imposition of the death penalty is incompatible with ... the prohibition of torture or other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.”  
(A/HRC/30/18, para. 55)

On the issue of torture, the Special Rapporteur found no categorical evidence on the methods of execution currently in use that comply with the prohibition in every case. The Council and the General Assembly should be able to follow that logic to make similar statements in the future. There may be no full international consensus on the death penalty, but we are strongly encouraged by the steady positive trend towards abolition worldwide.

In conclusion, I would like to raise the issue of Human Rights Council resolution 24/24, adopted in 2013, in paragraph 9 of which the Council encourages States

“to address acts of intimidation and reprisal against individuals and groups who cooperate or have cooperated with the United Nations”.

The resolution still awaits implementation, despite the fact that there are no longer any legal or practical obstacles to it. Threats to human rights defenders worldwide are increasing at an alarming pace. Those courageous individuals provide a key contribution to one of the three pillars of the United Nations. The Organization therefore has both a self-interest and a moral duty to help protect them. Human Rights Council resolution 24/24 must therefore be implemented without any further delay and in a manner that finds the widest possible political support.

**Ms. Yparraguirre (Philippines):** At the outset, allow me to convey the profound sympathies of the Government and the people of the Philippines to the Governments and the peoples of Iraq, Lebanon and France in the aftermath of the horrific terrorist attacks perpetrated in recent weeks against innocent civilians in Iraq, Lebanon and France, whose rights to life, liberty and security of person, as enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, have been violated. We stand in solidarity with the peoples of Iraq, Lebanon and France and all other affected countries in condemning those attacks and in fighting this scourge.

The Philippines thanks the President of the Human Rights Council for his briefing and welcomes the latest report on the work of the Council (A/70/53). I wish to express my country’s strong support for his efforts to enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of the Council.

Two weeks ago, my country received the honour of being elected for another term, the 2016-2018 term, as a member of the Council. We appreciate the opportunity to serve on the Council once more, and we pledge to continue to actively participate in its work in a spirit of constructive engagement and cooperation and with the aim of upholding international human rights standards. The Philippines has traditionally sponsored initiatives in the Human Rights Council on the protection of the human rights of vulnerable groups, such as migrants, women, indigenous peoples and persons with disabilities, and we continued to do so in the period covered by the report.

The Philippines was a principal sponsor of Human Rights Council resolution 29/15 on human rights and climate change, which calls for a study on the impact of climate change and the full enjoyment of the human right to health and decides to incorporate a panel discussion on the issue in the programme of work for the thirty-first session of the Human Rights Council. We will continue to work with partner countries in this very important area with a view to creating a stronger sense of urgency for a human rights-based approach to dealing with climate change. We would like to see the Council consider how the international community can respond to the calls of the people and communities whose lives and livelihoods are at risk and who may be forced to leave their homes and migrate, owing to climate-change-related events or disasters.

As Chair of the Climate Vulnerable Forum, a group of 20 countries that are most vulnerable to climate change, and as one of the most disaster-prone countries in the world, the Philippines places importance on continually raising the awareness of the international community on the very real and damaging impacts of climate change, the effects of which cut across the issues of human rights, migration, health, education and labour, among others.

On the Universal Periodic Review regional consultations, the Philippines presented Human Rights Council resolution 30/14 on the contribution of parliaments to the work of the Human Rights Council and its Universal Periodic Review. The resolution calls for convening a panel discussion during the thirty-second session of the Human Rights Council to take stock of the contribution of parliaments to the work of the Human Rights Council and its Universal Periodic Review and to identify ways to further enhance their contributions. In that regard, the Asia-Pacific regional consultation among parliamentarians was spearheaded by the Philippine Senate in Manila in February this year.

The Philippines strongly supports the Universal Periodic Review mechanism of the Human Rights Council. We firmly believe that it is a very useful tool for effecting real change on the ground, as it encourages all Member States to engage constructively and to work towards improving the human rights situation in a country, based on its national priorities and international obligations and commitments. The Philippines believes that there is a need for a sharper focus on providing international support for capacity-

building to enable countries to better implement their accepted recommendations.

In conclusion, the Philippines will continue to support and actively engage in the important work of the Human Rights Council and support its role as a venue for genuine and constructive dialogue, with a particular focus on capacity-building and international cooperation.

**Mr. Sukhee** (Mongolia): At the outset, let me express our deepest condolences to the families of the victims of those terrorist attacks committed in Paris last Friday. As His Excellency Mr. Elbegdorj Tsakhia, President of Mongolia, stated last Friday night, “We stand united with the people of France, and we have no doubt that France will prevail.”

Please allow me to express my Government’s deep gratitude for the valuable support extended to Mongolia on 28 October when, for the first time, it was elected to the Human Rights Council, for the term 2016-2018. Mongolia will do its utmost to uphold the trust invested in it and help to advance the cause of promoting and protecting human rights around the world. I would also like to take this opportunity to thank the President of the Human Rights Council for introducing the annual report (A/70/53) of the Council. My delegation commends the efforts of the Council, which is a key platform for constructive dialogue and cooperation to promote human rights throughout the world. Its current report reveals a realistic picture of current human rights violations and challenges worldwide and recommends possible ways and instruments to defend human rights, liberty, equality and dignity while combating intolerance, discrimination and violence.

The promotion and protection of human rights is one of the main pillars of Mongolia’s foreign policy. We recognize the centrality of human rights in sustainable development planning and acknowledge that human rights, the rule of law and democratic governance are all interlinked and mutually reinforcing. Mongolia will continue to promote the issues of human rights education; gender equality and the empowerment of women; the rights of the child, the elderly and persons with disabilities; the fight against human trafficking; and the abolition of the death penalty.

We appreciate the importance of the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) process because it gives all Member States an equal opportunity to bring their human rights situation to the attention of that important

body, share lessons learned and good practices and discuss challenges in the implementation of human rights obligations. The second national report of Mongolia under the UPR was discussed constructively in May and was received positively by the UPR Working Group, which welcomed Mongolia’s efforts to implement the recommendations made during the first UPR review. The Working Group made 164 recommendations, out of which the Government of Mongolia accepted 150. Currently, the Government is working on the development of the plan of action to implement the UPR recommendations.

Mongolia has consistently supported the work and activities conducted under the special procedures of the Council, and standing invitations were extended by the Government of Mongolia to all mandate-holders in 2004. Since then, Mongolia has received the visits of eight mandate-holders, including the Special Rapporteurs on the right to food, on the right to education, on torture, on extreme poverty and on human rights, and also the Working Group on business and human rights.

Mongolia appreciates the importance of the work of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and notes the increasing demand for the Office’s support and activities. Since 2014, Mongolia has been making modest voluntary financial contributions to the High Commissioner’s Office. As one of the three pillars of the United Nations, the promotion and protection of human rights should be strengthened, and the work of the High Commissioner’s Office for advancing human rights globally should not be held back by financial difficulties.

Mongolia believes that human rights are essential to achieving sustainable development. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (resolution 70/1) offers us critical opportunities to further advance the achievement of human rights for all people everywhere and without discrimination.

In conclusion, I would like to reiterate my Government’s full commitment to contributing to the Council’s activities during its membership, including through the voluntary pledges and commitments made under resolution 60/251. At the international level, Mongolia will continue to support the principles of non-selectivity, universality and the indivisibility of human rights and will work to ensure the full enjoyment of human rights, including civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights and the right to



development. At the national level, Mongolia will pursue the comprehensive implementation of its international obligations on human rights and enhance the promotion and protection of human rights through expanded collaboration with all stakeholders.

**Ms. Al-Nasrallah** (Kuwait) (*spoke in Arabic*): My delegation condemns the cowardly terrorist attacks in France, Lebanon and Iraq, attacks that call for the international community to combat international terrorism in all its forms and manifestations.

Today, the General Assembly is discussing one of the most important items on its agenda. I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Human Rights Council for its report (A/70/53), which outlines the Council's recent work aimed at promoting human rights at the international level and consolidating and protecting human rights. We would also like to thank the President of the Human Rights Council, Ambassador Joachim Rucker. The report covers numerous issues relating to human rights and their protection and to fundamental human freedoms. Moreover, it addresses the issue of human rights in a number of countries and focuses on the role of international organizations and on strengthening cooperation throughout the world. It also deals with such important issues as human trafficking, the human rights of people with disabilities and the stepping up of efforts to eliminate all forms of intolerance, discrimination and violence against women.

The report also includes the outcome of Kuwait's second Universal Periodic Review (UPR) of Kuwait, which requires the full cooperation of all members of the international community. Since the endorsement of its second UPR in January, the State of Kuwait has made great efforts to implement the outcome of that review. In its entirety, the review included 278 recommendations, 178 of which were accepted, because they were in line with the Constitution of the State of Kuwait. Kuwait duly noted 25 other recommendations, and four recommendations were partially accepted. I would like to announce that my country has endorsed a bill to establish, pursuant to the Paris Principles, a national institution with competence to promote and protect human rights and disseminate human-rights norms.

My country has established a committee for the defence of human rights in the National Assembly. It has also established public agencies to combat corruption and

conduct oversight of labour in all sectors. Undoubtedly, the concept of human rights is directly connected with the Sustainable Development Goals, which is due to the fact that the progress of countries can be measured in terms of the extent to which they have complied with their human rights obligations. Also, the Charter of the United Nations calls for the promotion of human rights and the protection of fundamental freedoms.

The State of Kuwait has offered a wide range of humanitarian assistance through intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations, including the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. We firmly believe in the need to promote international peace and security and respect for human rights. Against that backdrop, the State of Kuwait has hosted three international conferences in support of the humanitarian situation in Syria and to alleviate the suffering of the Syrian people, in line with report of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic (A/HRC/30/48). Accordingly, my delegation supported Human Rights Council resolution 29/16, on the continuing grave deterioration of the human rights and humanitarian situation in Syria.

As we are discussing the question of human rights, we call for respect for the human rights of the individual. We would like to strongly condemn the continuing brutal practices of Israel, the occupying Power, and its breach of the basic human rights of the helpless Palestinian people in the occupied territories. Israel must be forced to comply with its obligations under international human rights law. In that regard, we support all the relevant resolutions of the Human Rights Council referred to in the report.

In conclusion, despite the efforts undertaken by the State of Kuwait and the achievements made in the area of human rights at the national and international levels, our responsibilities with respect to this issue make it imperative that we continue our efforts to overcome all difficulties and challenges so that we can benefit from the body of international experience and expertise in our drive to achieve the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (resolution 70/1).

**Mr. Mahmoud** (Egypt): Egypt aligns itself with the statements made by the representative of Sierra Leone, on behalf of the Group of African States, and by the representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran, on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries.

At the outset, I would also like to welcome Ambassador Joachim R cker, Permanent Representative of Germany to the United Nations Office in Geneva and current President of the Human Rights Council. The delegation of Egypt would like to thank President R cker for his presentation today of the annual report of the Human Rights Council (A/70/53), as well as to congratulate him on the dedicated and tireless efforts he has made during his presidency of the Council.

Our meeting today comes in the wake of the abhorrent terrorist attacks in France, Egypt, Beirut and many other places around the world, which resulted in the loss of scores of innocent lives and have shocked the conscience of the international community. The dark plague of terrorism and extremism is emerging as a fundamental challenge for the global community and presents an insurmountable obstacle to the enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms, particularly with regard to the right to life and personal security. We welcome the adoption by the Human Rights Council of its resolution 28/17, on the effects of terrorism on human rights, and we urge the Council to stand united behind the timely and critical message it conveys, namely, condemning all acts of terrorism wherever they occur and by whomever they are perpetrated and considering the devastating impact of terrorism on the enjoyment of human rights.

Next year marks the tenth anniversary of the Human Rights Council. Since its inception, the Council's pivotal mandate has been to promote and protect human rights and fundamental freedoms globally. However, that mandate cannot be implemented effectively unless it is applied in accordance with the principles of non-politicization, non-selectivity, objectivity, universality and international cooperation, and within the framework of a genuine intergovernmental dialogue on human rights issues. The unprecedented challenges that ensuring universal respect for human rights is being subjected to will inevitably require expansion in the work and activities of the Human Rights Council and result in increased pressures on its resources and programme of work.

Egypt firmly supports enhancing the efficiency of the work of the Council in that regard. We welcome the adoption of A/HRC/PRST/29/1, on enhancing the efficiency of the Human Rights Council, and the subsequent follow-up decision, A/HRC/DEC/30/115. Egypt also recalls the commitments set forth in the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action in favour

of the universality, indivisibility, interrelatedness and interdependence of all civil, cultural, economic, political and social rights, including the right to development, and in support of the principle that all human rights should be treated in a fair and equitable manner, with the same emphasis and on an equal footing.

Next year marks the thirtieth anniversary of the United Nations Declaration on the Right to Development. We consider that occasion to be an opportune moment to step up the efforts of the United Nations and the international human rights community to realize the right to development and further elaborate its normative content, including by formulating measurable criteria and sub-criteria towards its implementation. We also look forward to the contributions that the Human Rights Council can make in supporting the global partnership in efforts to implement the new 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (resolution 70/1).

The eradication of poverty and the realization of economic, social and cultural rights are undoubtedly at the heart of the new global development charter. We are encouraged by the Council's efforts to adequately address the challenges standing in the way of the attainment of economic, social and cultural rights. In that regard, we note with great appreciation the Council's adoption of its resolution 28/15, on the right to work. In that resolution, which Egypt sponsored, the Council affirmed that decent work and full and productive employment were an integral part of achieving human rights and leading a dignified life.

We are pleased to see that the Human Rights Council continues to actively engage on issues of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and other related forms of intolerance, including religious intolerance, stigmatization and discrimination and violence on the basis of religion and belief. It is a matter for concern that we still witness recurring and alarming instances of such violations, especially in the context of political and electoral propaganda and the media, including social media. This situation requires firm and immediate action and the full and effective implementation of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action. The issue is all the more pressing as a result of the refugee and asylum-seeker crisis that is currently unfolding. In that regard, we urge the Human Rights Council to devote more attention to the human rights of migrants.

My delegation congratulates the Human Rights Council on the adoption of its resolution 29/22, on

protection of the family, which was led by Egypt and a cross-regional core group. By adopting an ambitious and substantively comprehensive text by a comfortable majority, the Human Rights Council reaffirmed States' obligations under international human rights law to provide effective protection for the family as the natural and fundamental unit of society. We look forward to the relevant report being presented by the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights next March.

On the other hand, we remain concerned by attempts to impose new controversial notions and concepts that have no basis in international human rights law. That approach could seriously undermine the universality of human rights as well as the credibility of the international human rights system.

I conclude by reiterating Egypt's continued support for the work of the Human Rights Council, as a subsidiary body of the General Assembly, and for its important role in promoting global respect for human rights.

**Mr. Kaluđerović** (Montenegro): Montenegro fully aligns itself with the statement delivered on behalf of the European Union.

Let me begin by offering my deepest condolences to the victims of the terrorist attacks in Paris and Lebanon. Those tragic events remind us of the importance of additionally strengthening the Human Rights Council and other human rights mechanisms and of joining our efforts in tackling terrorism and violent extremism.

My delegation would like to thank the President of the Human Rights Council, Ambassador Joachim Rucker, for presenting the annual report of the Human Rights Council (A/70/53) to the General Assembly. We appreciate this opportunity to discuss the achievements of the Human Rights Council in 2015, bearing in mind in particular that this is the last year of our membership in that body. I would like to pay particular tribute to Ambassador Rucker for the way in which he discharged his duties as President of the Council during its ninth year, and for his personal engagement in developing a set of responses to the non-negligible challenge of improving the Council's working methods. That included a retreat hosted earlier this year in Berlin, which truly helped in developing fruitful ideas on how to additionally strengthen the Geneva human rights system.

The realization of human rights is crucial to preserving democracy and freedom. It is essential to

achieving the great objective of the United Nations, namely, the maintenance of international peace and security. The struggle to uphold human rights is waged on behalf of the people who suffer injustice and seek redress or who are victims of merciless conduct by violent extremists and violations of international human rights and humanitarian law.

As can be learned from the report before us today, the Human Rights Council has demonstrated its ability to contribute to human rights protection efforts around the globe. The Council has continued to tackle sensitive issues, deal with many difficult and complex human rights situations and bridge differences between politically, ideologically and culturally different States that share a common goal of combating a sometimes shocking degree of dereliction of duty and abuse of human rights. In addition to its regular sessions, the special one held on Boko Haram has confirmed that the Council's activities are closely tied to today's extreme challenges.

Allow me to express our satisfaction that this year the Council adopted two important resolutions for which Montenegro was a part of the core group. One is aimed at combating the harmful practice of child, early and forced marriage, in order to prevent children, men and particularly women from being left on the margins of society. The other is designed to help the Government of Sri Lanka to negotiate the country's difficult processes of reconciliation and post-conflict transition. Indeed, we believe we are right in stating that this resolution reflects in miniature the larger objective of the Council, namely, bringing together the collective efforts of the international community and the political will of a Government with a view to enabling citizens who have borne significant suffering in the past to enjoy a more peaceful, secure and dignified life.

I turn now to the Human Rights Council's special procedures. This mechanism has proved to be a central tool for independent and impartial insight into the human rights situation from a thematic or country-specific perspective. We would like to pay tribute to the expertise of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), which, during the course of the year, continued to bring to the Council's attention alleged violations or abuse, to conduct thematic studies and to provide appropriate advice for technical assistance to countries in need.

In addition, we must be aware that any initiative that would assign a subsidiary role to the OHCHR in

relation to the Council would be counterproductive for the independence of the OHCHR. Rather, we should further strengthen the Council and the OHCHR by finding a way of making the two bodies more sensitive to each other's recommendations, and by advocating for a more sensitive approach when deciding on the financial means needed for their complementary and independent duties. In that regard, we will continue to advocate for the Human Rights Council and OHCHR to be provided, in future, with adequate resources to conduct their important duties.

We must pay sincere tribute to the Universal Periodic Review mechanism, which continues to be an important incentive for improving the human rights situation in the countries under review. As the third cycle is about to start, the success and results of the implementation phase will determine the efficiency and ultimate credibility of the mechanism and will demonstrate the extent of States' engagement in the promotion and protection of human rights. Montenegro pays a great deal of attention to the mechanism and recently submitted its mid-term report on the implementation of the recommendations received during the second cycle. We are also in the process of developing a national mechanism to follow up the recommendations received by way of the special procedures and treaty bodies.

As the Human Rights Council approaches its tenth anniversary, we often ask ourselves whether we have built an appropriate and credible mechanism to cope with the continuing new challenges that face the international community. It is difficult to assess results, given the daily gross violations of human rights for which perpetrators are often not held accountable and given the violent extremism and terrorism that are bent on disrupting the struggle for peace and security.

Syria's citizens continue to bear enormous pain owing to the conflict. Many have been forced to flee their homes, possibly becoming victims of trafficking and smuggling. A large percentage of the citizens live in hunger and poverty. Women still do not enjoy the same rights as men and continue to face harsh forms of discrimination. Some Governments continue inexorably to ignore the international community's appeals to improve the human rights situation. That attitude usually goes hand in hand with a narrow civil-society space in which human rights defenders face increasing intimidation and harassment.

It is also unfortunate that in every part of the world difference continues to be perceived as dangerous to

society rather than an enrichment. That includes the ongoing violence, harassment and discrimination carried out against lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex persons. And, finally, it is terrifying that the whole world must guard against possible activities on the part of the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant, Boko Haram and other terrorist and violent extremist groups.

Such negative phenomena must not discourage the efforts of the international community but should make it more alert to contemporary threats and help in building a more preventive approach to human rights challenges. In that regard, the Human Rights Council has truly achieved success in raising the level of accountability of States in human rights protection worldwide. We often underestimate the fact that the success of the Council and other human rights bodies in facing contemporary challenges depends on our own readiness to use that international forum to call for perpetrators of serious human rights violations to be brought to justice, for Governments to be held accountable to their citizens and for a proactive approach to be taken to building a culture of respect for human rights as the only acceptable standard.

We are the ones who need to ensure that in our international deliberations we extend the same corpus of rights to each individual member of society, regardless of ethnic, religious, sexual or any other affiliation. We must also recognize and respect the important role of civil society in the Council and on the ground. And we need to ensure that the same goals we promote in the Human Rights Council are mirrored within our own borders.

With that in mind, let me assure the Assembly that, upon ceasing to be a member of the Human Rights Council, Montenegro will continue its engagement to uphold human rights and protect the dignity of the human individual. We hope that our efforts in that regard, both at the national and the international level, will win us re-election to that eminent body for the period 2022-2024.

**Ms. Al-Thani** (Qatar) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, we would like to express our heartfelt condolences and sympathy to the victims of the criminal and terrorist attacks that took place in a number of neighbourhoods in the French capital of Paris and claimed the lives of many people. We strongly condemn such terrorist attacks, which run counter to all moral, humanitarian and religious values and are



aimed at the destabilization of countries and the killing of innocents. We pray for the full and speedy recovery of all of the injured victims.

Allow me to express our thanks to the President of the Human Rights Council for his briefing to the General Assembly on the work of the Council. We appreciate the work that he has undertaken in order to ensure respect for human rights in all countries. We endorse the contents of his reports (A/70/53 and A/70/53/Add.1) for their valuable and important information.

My country has supported the Human Rights Council since its inception as the primary organ concerned with human rights within the United Nations system. While we commend the Council for its impartiality, objectivity and non-selectivity, we must make every effort to ensure that the Council continues to fulfil its functions in improving the standards of human rights and addressing human rights violations, including expeditious responses to emergencies, promoting the rights to development and education, combating violence and putting an end to impunity. We strongly oppose attempts made by other parties to undermine the Council's efforts. We also commend the efforts of the Council to provide technical assistance and capacity-building to countries so that they can fulfil their human rights obligations, as well as the Council's growing and effective role in promoting and consolidating the culture of human rights while increasing awareness. In that regard, we call for continuing support for the Human Rights Council so as to enable it to continue its efforts, in view of the growing number of mandates that have been established and that require increased resources.

Additionally, we would like to underline the importance of the family, which is the primary component of society because it contributes to building societies and promoting development. I take this opportunity to endorse the adoption of Council resolution 26/11, regarding the protection of the family, which is at the heart of the work of the Human Rights Council. We look forward to the report that will be submitted in tandem with the implementation of that important resolution.

The State of Qatar, represented by its wise leadership, accords high priority to the respect of human rights in the context of the overall policy reform undertaken by our country in accordance with its comprehensive development vision, Qatar National

Vision 2030. The latter includes the improvement of health care and education, the mainstreaming of human rights in educational curricula, the promotion of human rights for women, children and persons with disabilities, combating human trafficking and improving conditions for foreign labourers. As a member of the Human Rights Council, Qatar is committed to fulfilling its obligations in the area of human rights, safeguarding humanitarian principles, promoting and consolidating the concepts and culture of human rights and cooperating with the Council. That has been reflected in our participation in the Council in discussions regarding the second Universal Periodic Review cycle.

Qatar continues to improve its record in the area of human rights, which has been substantiated by its standing invitation to all special-procedures mandate-holders. Qatar received a visit from the Special Rapporteur on the human rights of migrants in November 2013 and welcomed the visit of the Special Rapporteur on the independence of judges and lawyers in January 2014. Qatar is also host to the United Nations Human Rights Training and Documentation Centre for South-West Asia and the Arab Region in Doha. Tomorrow, on 17 November, the Third Committee will consider the draft resolution on the United Nations Centre, and we would like to thank the sponsors of that draft resolution, which has been submitted for the fourth time since the inception of the Centre in 2005.

In conclusion, we would like to reiterate our commitment to participating constructively and impartially in the area of human rights and to cooperating with the relevant United Nations agencies and international organizations in line with international standards, and especially with the Human Rights Council and its specialized organs and mechanisms.

**Mr. Otepola** (Nigeria): Nigeria joins other delegations in conveying our condolences to the Governments and the peoples of France, Iraq and Lebanon, who have suffered unwarranted attacks on harmless and innocent individuals. Nigeria views those attacks as directed not only against those people, but against all of humankind. Our hearts are with those who have lost loved ones and those injured during the unprovoked attacks.

My delegation warmly welcomes the President of the Human Rights Council, Ambassador Joachim Rucker, to New York and thanks him for the presentation of the report of the Human Rights Council for 2015 (A/70/53).

My delegation aligns itself with the statements delivered by the representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries and by the representative of Sierra Leone on behalf of the Group of African States.

Respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms lies at the heart of Nigeria's constitutional democracy. In that respect, we consider it important not just to ensure the promotion and protection of human rights within Nigeria, but also to uphold the tenets of those rights. Consequently, Nigeria will continue its active engagement with the Human Rights Council as the main organ of the United Nations charged with promoting and protecting human rights. We also want to join the President of the Human Rights Council in saying that human rights, as one of the three pillars of the United Nations, is closely tied to the two other pillars, namely, peace and security and development. Without peace there can be no development, and without development, there can be no peace.

However, it is also a fact that without human rights there would be neither peace and security nor development. The extent to which those rights mutually reinforce one another underscores the important role of the Human Rights Council in the maintenance of international peace and security. The activities of the Council during the reporting period clearly indicate the effort that has gone into the fulfilment of its mandate. The Council's three annual regular sessions and the various special sessions devoted to specific issues underscore the determination of the Council to address human rights issues of global concern. One of those special sessions was on the atrocities committed by the terrorist group Boko Haram. We welcome the support of the Human Rights Council in the fight against Boko Haram — as set out in Council resolution S-23/1, reproduced in its report of 1 April 2015 (A/HRC/S-23/2) — while promoting humanitarian assistance to refugees and internally displaced persons and technical assistance to the multinational joint task force, to which Nigeria has made available the sum of \$100 million for its operationalization. We would like to take this opportunity to assure the international community of our firm commitment to protecting human rights while fighting terrorism.

The various special procedures of the Council continue to play a vital role in the promotion and protection of human rights. The wide range of topics they cover and handle clearly demonstrates the

variety of the issues that the Council is seized with. We greatly appreciate their reports to the Council and their interactive meetings with the Third Committee. We have demonstrated our support for the special procedures by issuing a standing invitation to them to visit Nigeria.

We urge that the work of the Council continue to be guided by resolution 60/251 and solidly based on the fundamental principles underpinning the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action on human rights. While we see the Council as a unique tool for the protection and promotion of all human rights, whether civil, political, economic, social or cultural, we are also of the view that a focus on economic, social and cultural rights might be the Council's own contribution to assisting States in attaining the Sustainable Development Goals (see resolution 70/1).

The Universal Periodic Review (UPR) has so far proved to be very successful as a reliable mechanism for addressing human rights violations. It is remarkable that, since the first session of the Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review in February 2008, the mechanism has attracted a high level of participation by States. The second cycle of the UPR has reinforced the mechanism's importance as a means of promoting and protecting human rights across the world.

Nigeria acknowledges the active participation of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in the activities of the Human Rights Council. We welcome the Council's engagement with NGOs as a way of allowing the people's voice to be heard, but at the same time we hope its report will be guided by facts and objectivity. We would also like to see the Council pay greater attention to the human rights situation in all non-self-governing territories, with the specific aim of holding the administering Powers to their commitment to preparing such territories for full independence.

Finally, Nigeria will continue to emphasize the promotion of human rights and the protection of human dignity. We believe that equity and equality, practised by all, for all humankind, must be part of the basic foundation of the activities of the Human Rights Council, in accordance with universally agreed-on principles of human rights, for the benefit of the global community. In that connection, we call on the international community to assist Nigeria and other countries in similar situations in their efforts to recover and return illicit funds and stolen assets, in

order to enable those countries to enjoy human rights for development.

**Mr. González Franco** (Paraguay) (*spoke in Spanish*): I would first like to express the condolences and full solidarity of the Government and the people of Paraguay to the Governments and the peoples of Iraq, Lebanon and France for the terrible attacks they suffered last week.

Paraguay welcomes the report on the work of the Human Rights Council (A/70/53), presented by Ambassador Joachim Rucker, alongside whom my country, representing the Group of Latin American and Caribbean States (GRULAC), had the honour of serving as a Vice-President of the Council. I would like to take this opportunity to thank the GRULAC States for the trust they placed in us, as well as the President for all the work accomplished during his tenure. Our work in the Bureau was conducted with transparency and in a constructive and conciliatory spirit, while respecting the principles of universality and non-selectivity.

Paraguay considers the Human Rights Council to be fundamentally important not only within the United Nations, but in the world. Its role as the main intergovernmental body responsible for promoting and protecting human rights cannot be overemphasized. It is therefore essential that we remain committed to strengthening the Council and, above all, as States, to cooperating in enabling it to carry out its duties and, where appropriate, providing it with the resources it needs to perform effectively and adequately.

We emphasize the importance of the Universal Periodic Review as a mechanism that enables us to monitor the progress and the challenges that all countries deal with in the field of human rights, and to be monitored in our turn, and we believe that universal mechanism should be an inspiration to other United Nations bodies. While we do not doubt the impact of the Universal Periodic Review on the ground, I believe we should strengthen compliance with its recommendations at the national level.

Implementing the human rights recommendations of that universal and regional system is a priority for my country. For that reason and based on Paraguay's positive experience in that area and our awareness of the responsibility that membership in the Human Rights Council implies, we and Brazil led the action on the resolution that the Council adopted at its thirtieth session on strengthening national human rights follow-

up systems and processes. That resolution aims to share examples of best practices in implementing recommendations, while emphasizing the need to strengthen cooperation between the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights and States so as to improve countries' institutional capacities in the area.

I would also like to highlight that, together with Albania, Brazil, Colombia, Guatemala, Greece, Mexico, Norway, Switzerland and Uruguay, we sponsored the resolution entitled "Contribution of the Human Rights Council to the special session of the General Assembly on the world drug problem of 2016", with the main aim of ensuring that the Council contributes a human rights approach to the discussion of the issue, especially at the special session of the Assembly to be held in 2016. I am also pleased to be able to say that the Southern Common Market, of which my country is the current President, promoted the Council's adoption of the resolution entitled "The incompatibility between democracy and racism".

The Republic of Paraguay reaffirms its commitment to the effective promotion and protection of human rights throughout the world. We firmly believe that the dignity and rights of all people should be protected without discrimination. The Human Rights Council plays a key role in that endeavour, which is why we urge that it continue to carry out its functions with objectivity, impartiality and universality. I therefore call on States to continue to cooperate with the Council and to provide it with the assistance it needs to fulfil its goals.

**Ms. Izanova** (Kazakhstan) (*spoke in Russian*): I would first like to express our deep and heartfelt condolences to all the victims of the acts of terrorism in Paris, Baghdad and Beirut. We firmly condemn such attacks.

I would like to welcome His Excellency Mr. Joachim Rucker, President of the Human Rights Council, and to thank him for his presentation of the Council's report (A/70/53).

During the past year, Kazakhstan participated in the work of the Council as a Vice-President, representing the Asia-Pacific Group. As a Bureau member, Kazakhstan participated directly in the organization of the work for the Council's ninth cycle. Unfortunately, the cycle took place against the backdrop of an escalation in armed conflicts, terrorist acts and grave humanitarian

crises. As a result, the Council's agenda was focused on issues of migration, refugees and combating terrorism. Nevertheless, during its regular sessions, the Council also continued to work successfully on a wide range of other human rights issues, as reflected in the report. In that regard, we wish to commend the stellar professionalism of the Council's President in organizing the work of the Council effectively, and we take this opportunity to thank him for the joint work of the Bureau.

We support the efforts to increase the Council's productivity pursuant to the adoption at the twenty-ninth session of President's statement A/HRC/PRST/29/1, on 3 July. We also support efforts to achieve closer dialogue between the Council and the Third Committee and to improve cooperation between those bodies. In order to increase the efficacy of both bodies, we believe that it would be beneficial to find areas where duplicative practices can be eliminated.

We are convinced that the Council's activity should be based, first and foremost, on the principle of protecting women and children. As a traditional sponsor of a draft resolution on that issue, Kazakhstan moved, at the March session, to include in the draft the issues of protecting children in efforts to combat violence and prevent child suicide and the use of children in armed conflict. We thank the other countries on the Council that supported Council resolution 28/19.

The activity of the Council must be based on the principles of dialogue among equals and constructive cooperation. Those principles must remain fundamental in the consideration of all Council agenda items, without exception, including country-specific items. In that regard, we support the consensus resolution on Sri Lanka. We also support the initiatives of several countries to further promote the right to development. In the light of the recently adopted 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (resolution 70/1) and the upcoming thirtieth anniversary of the Declaration on the Right to Development, the Council must pay appropriate attention to the right to development in the upcoming anniversary year. We also feel that it is essential to approach all categories of human rights — civil, political, economic, social and cultural — in a balanced manner within the Council.

We wish to note separately that Kazakhstan continues to actively cooperate with the Council and with its mechanisms and procedures. In just the past

two years, our country was visited by four Special Rapporteurs. Kazakhstan stresses its interest in furthering dialogue with the Special Rapporteurs. During the same period, Kazakhstan presented its latest report to the four United Nations treaty bodies, completed the second Universal Periodic Review cycle and ratified the international Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. We wish also to note that, beginning in 2008, Kazakhstan has provided a yearly, voluntary contribution to the budget of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights.

To conclude, please allow me to wish every success to the new members of the Bureau and to express our hope that they will make a significant contribution to the promotion and protection of human rights. I would like to reiterate Kazakhstan's commitment to protecting fundamental human rights and freedoms and to cooperating closely with all mechanisms of the global human rights system.

**Mr. Bishnoi (India):** At the outset, I offer our heartfelt condolences for the victims of the terrorist attacks in Beirut and Paris last week.

We thank the President of the Human Rights Council for his briefing on the activities of the Council, and we welcome his report (A/70/53). I would also like to place on record our appreciation to him for the smooth and effective manner in which he has conducted the deliberations of the Council.

We align ourselves with the statement made by the representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries.

The Human Rights Council has evolved into an indispensable forum for voluntary participation and for sharing national experiences and best practices in the protection and promotion of human rights. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development envisages

“a world of universal respect for human rights and human dignity, the rule of law, justice, equality and non-discrimination” (*resolution 70/1, para. 8*).

The clear reflection of human rights principles and standards in the people-centred 2030 Agenda underlines the collective political will to strive to synergize the work of the United Nations in its three pillars of peace and security, development and human rights.

The Human Rights Council now has an even more important role to play. It must continue to strengthen its



adherence to the fundamental principles of universality, transparency, impartiality, objectivity, non-selectivity and constructive international dialogue, while seeking to realize human rights for all. The Council must ensure that the indivisibility, interrelatedness and interdependence of all human rights, including the right to development, are respected and dealt with in a fair and equal manner.

The universality of human rights cannot, however, be construed as a universality of values and systems. The Council must bear in mind the significance of national and regional particularities and of the various historical, cultural and religious backgrounds of countries in its dialogues with Member States. The unique and positive mechanism of the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) is widely accepted and has bolstered the credibility of the institution. As we approach the third cycle of the UPR and the tenth anniversary of the Council, we need to maintain the universality of the mechanism and further improve its efficiency by rationalizing recommendations. We must refrain from using it to impose specific thematic issues that have not acquired universal acceptance. We should also find ways to support developing countries in the implementation of their accepted recommendations through capacity-building.

I would like to mention that the success of dialogue with the important mechanism of special procedures hinges on their continued independence and impartiality and on the related tasks being carried out with responsibility and sensitivity. Another concern is the Council's continued dependence on voluntary funding. It is clear that the Council needs to continue to rationalize its priorities to make the most efficient use of limited resources.

We take this opportunity to express our deep appreciation to the High Commissioner for Human Rights, Prince Zeid Ra'ad Zeid Al Hussein, and his Office for assisting States in their efforts to promote and protect human rights. The unique role played by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) in fulfilling its mandate is unparalleled in the United Nations. At the same time, we share the view that the inherent ambiguities in the governance and administrative arrangements of the Office, including in the funding, geographical diversity of staffing and strategic planning, are hindering its optimal performance, as highlighted in the recent Joint Inspection Unit review report. In that regard, we take

note of the efforts of the High Commissioner to improve efficiency and streamline the work of his Office through the change initiative. Those efforts notwithstanding, it is important, in our view, for Member States to agree on a mechanism to comprehensively address those long-standing issues, including enhancing the transparency and accountability of OHCHR.

It is our long-held belief that human rights issues cannot be approached in isolation, which would ignore the complex and intricate relationship between human rights, development, democracy and international cooperation. As we approach the tenth anniversary of the Human Rights Council, we must also remain mindful of the reasons for its creation and avoid repeating past mistakes.

The Council should respect the right of each State to organize and manage its affairs, including in the field of human rights, and guard against falling into the trap of putting a country in the spotlight in a selective manner and engaging in intrusive monitoring, which has, time and again, proven to be counterproductive. The need of the hour is to ensure that the Council continues to function in a non-selective, non-politicized, non-confrontational and transparent manner. We must guarantee full respect for the core principles of Article 2 of the Charter of the United Nations, namely, the sovereign equality, territorial integrity and political independence of all States Members of the United Nations.

As a member, India remains committed to making the Human Rights Council a strong, effective and efficient body capable of promoting and protecting human rights and fundamental freedoms for all, so that it retains its pre-eminent place as a leading international human rights institution.

**Mr. Zehnder** (Switzerland) (*spoke in French*): Switzerland is deeply shocked and concerned by the terrorist attacks perpetrated last week in Beirut, Baghdad and Paris. Switzerland strongly condemns those heinous acts, which go against the fundamental values of any society, and assures the countries affected of its full solidarity. It expresses its deepest condolences to the families of the victims and the countries affected by that scourge.

Switzerland thanks the President of the Human Rights Council for his presentation. The promotion and protection of human rights are priorities for Switzerland. They are among its most treasured values.

Switzerland attaches paramount importance to the role of the Council and to its effectiveness, as well as to maximizing its impact in ensuring respect for human rights throughout the world. As the host State to the Human Rights Council, Switzerland believes that it has a special responsibility to support the Council in achieving its objectives. Moreover, we are especially pleased to have been elected to the Council for the 2016-2018 term, and thus to be able to continue our major commitment to the promotion and protection of human rights as a full member.

Switzerland expresses its gratitude to the President of the Council and congratulates him on the exemplary manner in which he has performed as President over the past year. In particular, we welcome the fact that, under his presidency, priority has been given to cooperation with civil society, to strengthening the human rights pillar of the United Nations and to an element that we believe contributes considerably to that strengthening, namely, improving the working methods of the Human Rights Council.

In the course of its sessions, the Council has succeeded in adapting to new human rights challenges by extending the scope of its activities, both at the thematic level and in terms of country situations. That wider field of activity is clear proof of its success. But to some extent, the Council has also been a victim of its success. Having increased and diversified its activities to such an extent, it has reached the limit of its capacities. That is why Switzerland commends the progress made during the presidency in improving the working methods of the Council. We welcome the fact that concrete proposals were made, and we will continue to support the operationalization of initiatives aimed at achieving more effective and efficient working methods.

Strengthening the human rights pillar of the United Nations is essential for ensuring that human rights are respected everywhere in the world. That reinforcement is achieved by addressing more closely human-rights-related issues within all the bodies of the United Nations. From that perspective, we welcome in particular the President's personal commitment to strengthening the link between the Human Rights Council and the Third Committee, and also with the Security Council, through his participation in several meetings and events on this side of the Atlantic. That closer contact between Geneva and New York is helping to strengthen the human rights pillar throughout the United Nations system.

Civil-society actors are key partners of the United Nations system. Close cooperation between them and the Council is essential for ensuring respect for human rights in the world. Switzerland is nevertheless concerned about the ever-increasing number of cases of intimidation and reprisals against individual civil-society members, in particular those who cooperate with United Nations mechanisms. Switzerland calls on all States Members of the United Nations to ensure the protection of those individuals.

I would like to conclude by assuring the President of the Council of Switzerland's continued commitment to the Human Rights Council in the continuation of its essential work in protecting and promoting human rights.

**Mr. Alday González (Mexico)** (*spoke in Spanish*): My delegation joins in condemning, in the strongest possible terms, the terrorist acts that were committed in Baghdad, Beirut and Paris recently, and expresses the condolences of the Government and the people of Mexico to the families and peoples of Iraq, Lebanon and France.

Mexico welcomes the report submitted by the President of the Human Rights Council (A/70/53), and the work done by the Council at its twenty-eighth, twenty-ninth and thirtieth sessions, as well as at the twenty-third special session. As we have mentioned on other occasions, the Council's report provides a unique opportunity to review the main elements of its progress, and for delegations to express their concerns with regard to the functioning of the universal system of human rights. The Council is at the centre of that system, and therefore the analysis of its report will have a positive and visible impact on improving the situation of human rights throughout the world.

Mexico wishes to stress the sound functioning of the Universal Periodic Review mechanism, a tool that has most likely been one of the main contributions of the Human Rights Council. The peer-review scrutiny, which is carried out constructively and progressively, must be viewed as an opportunity to improve the national human rights situations in all Member States and allows one to avoid falling into any kind of complacency or deception.

Reflection on the functioning of the Council is a process that must focus on continuing improvement of the way it works. Mexico has insisted on the importance of adopting a qualitative rather than quantitative

approach in assessing the impact of the Council. We must also ensure the effectiveness of its deliberations, and we say this given the proliferation of resolutions and mandates, which stands in contrast to the effectiveness of its work in the field.

We welcome the President's statement A/HRC/PRST/29/1 and Council decision 30/115, on enhancing the efficiency of the Council, adopted this year. They will help to promote the adoption of certain initial measures that will optimize the work of the Council by adjusting the work timetable of the Advisory Committee in the process of considering the applications of those aspiring to be mandate-holders.

Mexico firmly maintains the right of members of the Council to submit initiatives that will contribute to the treatment by that body of the major topics within the human rights field. However, Mexico emphasizes that, in order to implement that right, the members must take a constructive approach when submitting a draft resolution. A constructive approach in the resolutions process is essential so as to ensure the strengthening of international human rights. The wording of the initiatives must seek to create a constructive and balanced text aimed at achieving consensus among all the views of its members. They must fundamentally promote respect for equal rights and the principles of universality, impartiality, objectivity and non-selectivity, which, under its mandate, regulate the functioning of the Council.

Ten years after its establishment, the Human Rights Council represents an important step forward for the United Nations. It is time to continue improving procedures and to begin implementing some of the measures discussed so as to make the work of the Council more effective and, above all, so that concrete results on the ground can ensue for all individuals everywhere.

**Mr. Hetesy** (Hungary): Hungary thanks the President of the Human Rights Council, Mr. Joachim Rucker, for presenting the annual report of the Council (A/70/53) to the General Assembly.

Hungary fully aligns itself with the statement delivered by the observer of the European Union, and joins others in expressing its deepest condolences to all the peoples and the Governments affected by the recent terrorist attacks.

Hungary reiterates its full and continued support for the work of the Human Rights Council and its

mechanisms. We have been an active supporter of the Council since its establishment, in 2006, including by taking a leading role in introducing draft resolutions on the independence of the judiciary and on the question of reprisals. Hungary was a member of the Council between 2009 and 2012, and served as one of the Vice-Presidents between 2011 and 2012. We have presented our candidature for membership in the Council for the period 2017-2019. We are strongly committed to the protection of human rights defenders and firmly believe that the participation of civil society in the work of the Council is essential. We remain deeply concerned about continued acts of intimidation and reprisals against those who cooperate or seek to cooperate with the United Nations, its representatives and mechanisms in the field of human rights. In that regard, we welcome the actions taken by the President of the Human Rights Council to address that important issue, as he explained in his statement delivered today.

We attach great importance to the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) and believe that, over the past seven years, the UPR has established itself as a unique and important peer-review mechanism. In our national capacity, we have submitted our mid-term UPR report, and we are now preparing our second review, to be held in the spring of 2016. We also strongly support the work of the special procedures of the Council, which play a crucial role in advancing the human rights agenda of the United Nations. Hungary, in line with the strong plea of the President this morning, has extended a standing invitation to all human rights experts from the special procedures, and we will continue to cooperate with experts who have pertinent mandates by facilitating their country visits, responding in a timely manner to their communications and acting on their recommendations.

In the past, we have facilitated the visits of six different experts with human rights mandates to Hungary, and we look forward to the upcoming visits of the United Nations Working Group on Discrimination against Women in Law and Practice, the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders and the Special Rapporteur on the right to the freedoms of peaceful assembly and association. Hungary continues to host the annual Budapest Human Rights Forum as part of its commitment to raise awareness about the human rights issues that are high on the international community's agenda. The eighth Budapest Human Rights Forum, held last week at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, was dedicated

to the seventieth anniversary of the United Nations and featured discussions about human rights and sustainable development, the participation of minorities and the universal periodic review.

Hungary attaches great importance to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (resolution 70/1). As co-Chair of the Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals, Hungary worked with Member States and other stakeholders to ensure that the Goals and targets of the 2030 Agenda reflected the universality and indivisibility of all human rights. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development promises peaceful, just and inclusive societies that are free from fear and violence, and it incorporates important elements on democratic governance, the rule of law, access to justice and the protection of fundamental freedoms. The Agenda also places the principles of equality and non-discrimination at the centre of sustainable development efforts. If implemented effectively, the Agenda will go a long way towards ensuring the fulfilment of human rights for all. We therefore believe that the Human Rights Council and its mechanisms can also contribute to the effective implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

Let me conclude by reiterating Hungary's full support for the work of the Human Rights Council.

**Mr. Jürgenson** (Estonia): At the outset, I would like to express my deepest condolences to the families of the victims of the terrorist attacks in Paris. We stand in solidarity with the Government and the people of France.

Estonia aligns itself with the statement made by the observer of the European Union, and we would like to make some additional remarks in our national capacity.

Estonia expresses its appreciation for the work of the Human Rights Council and to the President of the Council, Mr. Joachim Rucker, for his presence here today and for presenting his overview on the developments of the past year.

Estonia will conclude its term in the Human Rights Council at the end of this year, having been a member since 2013. We support the regular exchange of information and the efforts made to coordinate the work of the Human Rights Council and that of the Third Committee. We hope that the Council and the Committee will support and complement each other's work. Furthermore, we must work on incorporating human rights issues consistently within the United

Nations framework, and also on ensuring the continued effectiveness of the Council and of the Committee to contribute to the development and protection of human rights.

During our term in the Human Rights Council, we have focused on ensuring and protecting democracy, the rule of law, good governance and fighting impunity in all forms, with emphasis on supporting the activities of the International Criminal Court. In addition, we have stood for universal human rights, as they are a fundamental part of international institutions, as well as for improving women's rights, advancing gender equality and eliminating gender-based violence. We have been committed to protecting the rights of the child, and believe that corporal punishment for children is unacceptable. We call on Member States to prohibit corporal punishment in any form.

Estonia will continue to focus on the rights of indigenous peoples and their participation in United Nations forums. The importance of cultural heritage and the respect for the fundamental right of indigenous peoples to their traditional lands is a key aspect in that regard. We are strong supporters of the active participation of civil-society organizations, and we value their contributions in the field of human rights. A strong democracy should acknowledge the role and importance of civil society while respecting its independence and freedom.

We are deeply committed to ensuring human rights, including freedom of expression and offline and online opinion. We believe that freedom of expression and opinion are the cornerstones of democracy and an open society. Only democracy and the rule of law can guarantee those freedoms, along with the principle that everyone is and will be held accountable for their words and actions. Freedom of expression cannot limit the right to privacy, or vice versa.

Those freedoms further include unlimited and unrestricted access to the Internet. As one of the founding members of the Freedom Online Coalition, Estonia will continue to push for the freedom of expression and the protection of human rights on the Internet. While the need for greater cybersecurity has been described as a reason for restrictions, Estonia believes that Internet freedom and cybersecurity are not mutually exclusive concepts, and security is not an excuse to limit the freedom of expression. We believe in a free and secure Internet for all.



In conclusion, Estonia would like to reiterate its support for the work of the Human Rights Council and its mechanisms. We will continue to be committed to the promotion and protection of human rights in all forums.

**Mr. Tesfay** (Eritrea): First of all, on behalf of myself and the Government of Eritrea, I would like to express our condolences to the Governments and the people and families of the victims of terrorism in France and other countries.

My delegation wishes to welcome the President of the Human Rights Council and takes note of the Council's annual report to the General Assembly (A/70/53). Eritrea believes, as has been stressed clearly and strongly on a number of occasions by the Group of African States, the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries and other regional groups, that the Universal Periodic Review remains a valid and appropriate mechanism for enhancing constructive dialogue and cooperation on human rights issues among Member States. That tool should not be undermined by unnecessary parallel and overlapping initiatives. Article 2 of the Charter of the United Nations clearly states that non-interference in the internal affairs of States should also be a guiding principle for United Nations bodies, including the Human Rights Council. The core tenets of human rights values are best promoted when the Council upholds the principles of universality, impartiality, objectivity and non-selectivity, and those founding principles should be respected and promoted at all times by all Member States.

The report of the Human Rights Council to the Assembly reflects important work on issues that my delegation highly values. However, it must be pointed out that my delegation rejects the proliferation of country-specific mandates. For example, renewing the mandates of the Special Rapporteur and the Commission of Inquiry on Eritrea is unwarranted and unnecessary. It is a politically motivated act that does not reflect the reality on the ground in Eritrea. It also lacks context. Even development programmes, such as afforestation, water harvesting and dam building, as well as other infrastructural activities that were implemented with the full participation of the people, have been deliberately presented as involving slave labour. Contrary to such distorted assertions by the mandate-holders, there are in fact effective ways of mobilizing domestic resources for sustainable development. Eritrea should be commended

and emulated — not intimidated and threatened — and its development activity must not be misrepresented.

Despite the occupation of its sovereign territory, including the town of Badme, and the politically motivated unjust sanctions imposed on it, Eritrea — with its 50 per cent Muslim and 50 per cent Christian population; its location along a major maritime trade route in the volatile Horn of Africa and Red Sea region; and its 1,200 kilometres of coastline and more than 350 islands — is fully committed to, and engaged in, advancing and realizing the hard-fought social, cultural, economic and political aspirations of its people. It is therefore appropriate to mention a few of its human rights agenda issues and achievements.

The political, social and economic rights of women are fully respected under the law. They have equal rights to own property, they are paid equally for equal work, and female genital mutilation has been criminalized. Under the motto, "Education for All", education is free from kindergarten to the tertiary level. At the tertiary and vocational levels, students are provided with free food and lodging.

In the health sector, Eritrea has achieved Millennium Development Goals 4, 5 and 6 and has established a solid basis for transitioning to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (resolution 70/1). Eritrea has also been declared, by the World Health Organization, to be a polio- and measles-free country.

The establishment of a Special Rapporteur and a Commission of Inquiry on the same issue and on the same country, in this case Eritrea, is not only redundant, it is also a waste of time and resources that cannot be justified or rationalized. It must be terminated. It must be underlined that the Special Rapporteur is also a member of the Commission of Inquiry. That fund could be reallocated to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights to enhance its technical cooperation with Member States. Eritrea's humble recommendation is consistent with the appeal of the High Commissioner to Member States to strengthen the regular budget of the human rights body.

For the Human Rights Council to base its actions on a report presented to it by two or three individuals who collected information from faceless, nameless sources is not only procedurally wrong, it is a travesty of justice as well. It must be rejected. The Council should not allow itself to be politically manipulated and

used by any group or member country, big or small, rich or poor. The Council's main objective should be to promote human rights standards through constructive engagement and dialogue. It should not be used as an instrument within a certain country's sinister agenda that has little value in improving the human rights situation of any given country.

The Council must also provide an opportunity for the party concerned and accused to defend itself and explain the human rights situation in the country. The dictum that one is innocent until proven guilty must be respected by all Member States, including the Council.

I wish to appeal to the President of the Human Rights Council to guide Council members to thoroughly interrogate any justifiably established mandate-holders and deal only with issues that are verifiable and collected from credible sources. Sweeping allegations and sensational sound bites must be avoided and challenged.

In conclusion, we ought to remind ourselves that, not long ago, we witnessed the termination of

the Commission on Human Rights, when some of its members used it as a political tool for threats and intimidation, mostly against developing countries. Once again, I appeal to the President of the Human Rights Council to exercise maximum vigilance in order to maintain the integrity of the Council.

Nobody can tell, nor has the right to tell, the Eritrean or other people what to be or not to be in their country, and what to do or not to do. The people, and only the people, of Eritrea are the determiners of their destiny. What the Eritrean people need is solidarity, cooperation and engagement, not conditionality, threats and intimidation. We must also not forget that the right to development is also a human rights issue. Let us practice what we preach — nobody must be left behind.

The Eritrean Government once again reaffirms its commitment to the attainment of improved human rights standards in order to guarantee the full enjoyment of such rights by the people of Eritrea.

*The meeting rose at 1.10 p.m.*