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*PREMIÈRE SESSION DU CONSEIL DES DROITS DE L'HOMME
PRIMERA SESIÓN DEL CONSEJO DE DERECHOS HUMANOS DE NACIONES UNIDAS
FIRST SESSION OF THE HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL OF THE UNITED NATIONS*

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STATEMENT BY H.E. MR. JULI MINOVES

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PRINCIPALITY OF ANDORRA

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**Statement by his Excellency
Mr. Juli Minoves,
Minister of Foreign Affairs, Culture and Cooperation of the Principality of Andorra**

*First session of the Human Rights Council of the United Nations
Geneva, 20th June 2006*

Mr. President,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

There are moments in the history of humanity which define an epoch. Today has to be one of these moments. A new tool for the promotion of human rights has been created, destined to become the third pillar of the United Nations system. Just as the creation of the UN at the San Francisco Conference in 1945, the approval of the Human Rights Charter in 1948, and the formation of the International Criminal Court fifty years later, the opening of the first session of the Human Rights Council has to give a new impulse to human rights, that series of natural rules of respect and tolerance that maintains the dignity of man and makes us civilised people. In the end, in this 21st century, we can only meet the challenges that we have in matters of peace, security and development if we can achieve the establishment of human rights as a universal and absolute rule for coexistence.

Those who respect human rights do not kill, destroy or place bombs. Those who promote human rights do not become unjustly rich. Those who live for human rights, live and let live and respect their neighbours with their different ways.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Never until today have we as human beings had in our hands the means to make a better world and to live in harmony, thanks to the development of ideas and technology. The growth of ideas, the painful recovery from the wars of the 20th century, have allowed us to constitute a universal legacy for coexistence, called human rights. Technology in all ambits can liberate us from the most basic needs and so allow a generalised raising of the state of humanity. But those of us who are here today, all the representatives and leaders of the peoples of the world, we have to make this will, which we surely all share, a reality day by day, in every little decision which we take in our countries, not just in the great declarations. We must make human rights a rule of Government.

Andorra is a little state, without an army, the strength or the geopolitical will to impose decisions on any other country or human group. History and geography shaped us, in the 13th century, as a little country. But the Andorran people have worked to maintain, on a human scale, a small community in which a respect for others is fundamental. Perhaps this is why we have had a parliament since 1419 and more than seven hundred years of peace. This is our experience, which we offer to the new Human Rights Council, to which we shall introduce ourselves in a few years' time.

Ladies and gentlemen,

The Principality of Andorra considers the promotion and the protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms as one of its priorities. In 1993 Andorra adopted a written Constitution which allowed the entry of the Principality into the international scene. My country then became a member of various international organisations joining the United Nations on the 28th of July 1993. Since 1993 Andorra has ratified more than 130 international conventions and instruments. Andorra's commitment to human rights is firm. My country's Constitution incorporates the

Universal Declaration of Human Rights in its text and, at the beginning of this decade, I had the privilege to have it published in our Official Journal. Andorra is progressively adopting mechanisms for the effective protection of human rights through the ratification of international instruments. At an early stage, we adopted human rights conventions of the Council of Europe. In the context of this process, I am pleased to announce that recently the Parliament of the Principality has approved adoption of the Convention on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, the Convention against Torture, and the Convention against Genocide. In the parliamentary session tomorrow the agenda includes an item on the approval of adherence to the *International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights* and its optional protocols. Thus, these conventions will very soon be added to the other basic instruments of the United Nations and the Council of Europe which Andorra has already ratified.

Andorra celebrates the progress brought with the creation of the Human Rights Council. The establishment of the new mechanism of universal periodic review and the changes in the methods of election of its members reinforces the transparency and relevance of this new body. The transfer to the new body of the important legacy of the Commission on Human Rights is an essential basis to continue to work on the promotion and the protection of human rights, in a new era beginning with more consolidated and adapted parameters to the new millennium.

Today we begin a period of reflection to provide the Council with mechanisms for efficient functioning and for definition of its mandates. I am convinced that this will be accompanied in parallel by a substantial debate around the human rights agenda. The report by the High Commissioner for Human Rights will be of great help to us in this mission. Furthermore, Andorra will be following with great interest the adoption, within the framework of this session of the Human Rights Council, of the project for a Convention for the Protection of all Persons from Enforced Disappearances and the adoption of the project of Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. Both themes have received Andorran support in the framework of the Commission on Human Rights and of ECOSOC on several occasions.

Ladies and gentlemen,

In 1998, I had the honour of representing my country in Rome for the setting up of the International Criminal Court. I come to Geneva today with strong feelings to bring the best wishes of the Andorran people to the Council at this historical beginning of its work. Allow me to congratulate H.E. Ambassador de Alba on his election as President of the first session of the Human Rights Council and thank him for his work in the process of negotiation, which has allowed the opening of this first session with a spirit of understanding and hope among the members of the organisation.

Thank you.