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ante las Organizaciones Internacionales
Ginebra

STATEMENT

BY MRS PAULINA VELOSO,

MINISTER OF THE PRESIDENCY

AT THE HIGH LEVEL SEGMENT OF THE FIRST SESSION OF

THE HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL

Geneva, 19-30 june 2006

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HIGH LEVEL SEGMENT

Statement of Minister of the Presidency of Chile, Mrs. Paulina Veloso

Mr. President, Mr. Secretary-General, Mr. President of the General Assembly, Mrs. High Commissioner, ladies and gentlemen,

It is for me an honour and a reason for satisfaction to take the floor in this historical inaugural session of the Human Rights Council, as a woman in the quality of Minister of State, on behalf of President Michelle Bachelet, first woman president of Chile and the first woman in South America to have been elected a President by universal vote and to express our gratitude to the U.N. Organization, where so many debates on the rights of women have taken place, in particular, on their right to participate on equal terms at all political and social levels. Equality that has been consecrated in such important international instruments as the U.N. Charter, the Universal Declaration on Human Rights and the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women.

Since the very beginning, Chile has been an assiduous contributor to the development of the international system of human rights protection. Our compatriot, Hernán Santa Cruz, was one of the eight members of the Drafting Committee which, under the chairmanship of Mrs. Eleanor Roosevelt, elaborated the text of the Universal Declaration on Human Rights.

Faithful to this traditional spirit of cooperation, we have been actively involved in the creation of this new body of the universal human rights system, since we fully adhere to the purpose pursued by this reform, that is to say the fulfilment of the expectations of men and women throughout the world of raising the cause of human rights to the same level of importance as those of security and development. The history of humanity shows that there can be neither development nor security without observance of human rights.

Mr. President,

Our country values the decision that this new body should preserve the strengths of the Commission on Human Rights, particularly with regard to the important work of the Special Rapporteurs and Independent Experts, known as the system of special procedures, and that it should maintain the ample and active participation of civil society in the preservation and promotion of human rights. Our country also underscores the necessity of increasing the capacity of the multilateral human rights system of responding to emergency situations and favours the establishment of a universal periodic review mechanism in order to reduce political selectivity in the review of country situations. Composed of members who have voluntarily pledged their commitments to the promotion and protection of human rights, the Council has gained in legitimacy of action.

Mr. President,

I wish to avail myself of this opportunity to express a particular acknowledgement for the work carried out by the Commission on Human Rights throughout its sixty years of existence. Among the achievements of the Commission we cannot fail to mention the special procedures, which have been decisive for our country's overcoming the dark period of its history, when the Chilean democracy was abruptly interrupted and human rights and fundamental freedoms were gravely trampled. Several of these special procedures continue lending their support to the successive democratic governments in the gradual realisation of their task of ensuring the effective enjoyment of human rights for all of our citizens.

It is with particular emotion that I address to this assembly a personal testimony of gratitude for the work the Commission on Human Rights has done for my country. In 1997, my husband Alexei Jaccard, Swiss-Chilean student of the University of Geneva, fell victim of an enforced disappearance in Argentina, in the framework of what is known as the "Condor Operation", carried out jointly by the Chilean and Argentinean police. At the age of twenty, I was received and supported by the Special Rapporteur for Chile, Mr. Abdoulaye Dièye and by the Head of that at that time was the Human Rights Division, Mr. Theo van Boven. Although their action did not lead to any practical result in this case, the effort of the Commission to claim the rights of the disappeared, together with a condemnation on behalf of the international community produced a dissuasive impact which may have limited the number of disappearances. At those moments of loneliness and anxiety, the care of the Commission was a great support to me, which gave me the strength to keep confidence in people, in human rights and in the community that defends them.

In this context, I wish to highlight the noteworthy standard-setting work carried out by the Commission, which led, *inter alia*, to the adoption of the Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture, which will enter into force shortly, and to the adoption, promoted by Chile, of the Basic Principles and Guidelines for reparation to victims of human rights violations. Both matters, prevention of torture and reparation to victims of human rights violations, constitute an essential part of our national and international human rights agenda.

Mr. President,

We are sure that the Human Rights Council will continue and strengthen this standard-setting function, which has been so significant for the development of the international human rights law.

Therefore we request the Human Rights Council to adopt, in this first session, the Convention on Enforced Disappearances, which recognizes the right of every person to be protected from enforced disappearance, as well as the right to justice and reparation, and which typifies the general and systematic use of enforced disappearance as a crime against humanity, which affirms the right to know the truth about the circumstances of an enforced disappearance and about the fate of the disappeared person and which establishes the urgent actions to be undertaken for the search of the disappeared persons by means of the innovative mechanism of "international habeas corpus", which will be a special function of the Committee on

Enforced Disappearance to be created in application of the said international instrument. We are confident that the preventive character of this instrument will contribute to avoiding the perpetration of such horrendous crimes that so deeply hurt the societies that suffer them.

Mr. President,

Chile wishes to stress once again the universality, indivisibility, interdependence and interrelation of all human rights, whether civil and political, or economic, social and cultural and the necessity to attribute equal importance and concern to all of them.

Accordingly, we resolutely support the renewal of the respective working group's mandate by this first session of the Human Rights Council, incorporating the mandate of initiating the elaboration of an Optional Protocol to the Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights for the purpose of strengthening the protection of these rights and surmounting the inequalities which affect our societies, Chile included.

Mr. President,

We are convinced that the combat against intolerance and discrimination based on race, gender, national or social origin, colour or religion or whatever other condition, should be a moral, ethical as well as political imperative for all nations. As far as our country is concerned, we have assumed this commitment by promoting the anti-discrimination agenda contained in the Declaration and Programme of Action of the Durban World Conference. We consider that the Intergovernmental Working Group should continue advancing, gradually and on a basis of consensus, towards the effective and non-selective implementation of the said agenda.

Mr. President,

With the creation of the Human Rights Council, the international system for the protection of human rights enters into a new phase, which should be characterised by efficiency in the pursuance of its goal and by constructive dialogue and cooperation. This is a huge responsibility, in which the credibility and legitimacy of the whole system are at stake and, above all, the hope of those who suffer violations of their human rights. We cannot disappoint them, let us be dependable and generous in taking up this challenge.

Therefore, we call upon this Council to deal with the organizational matters, which are necessary when establishing any new body, without detaining the action of the human rights protection machinery, and to tackle those matters deemed by the international community to deserve priority, laying a solid foundation for this new stage we are initiating.

Thank you.