



REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA
Ministry of Foreign Affairs

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Address

**by H.E. Mr. Fuad Hasanovic, Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs of the
Republic of Macedonia before the Inaugural Session of the Human Rights
Council of the United Nations**

Geneva, 19 June 2006

**Mr. President,
Excellencies,
Distinguished Delegates,**

It is my privilege and honor to be part of the historic event expected to give new strength and provide a new fresh start to our common endeavors in the sphere of promotion and protection of human rights and freedoms. We embarked on a new path. The aim is an effective body covering all human rights for all and making a genuine contribution for all. The Human Rights Council is a powerful tool to regain the UN values and principles, as was originally envisaged by the creation of the United Nations.

But let me first of all congratulate Ambassador de Alba on his appointment as President of the Council. He has a challenging task of leading a process to shape the agenda and working methods of this important body. Rest assured that you will have a genuine support of the Republic of Macedonia.

We are happy that Geneva has been and continues to be the symbol of our shared cause – credible and effective human rights machinery.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

We have already passed a long path since our Heads of State or Government made a solemn commitment at the Summit of September 2005. The negotiations leading to the adoption of the resolution 60/251 were long and difficult. Many compromises have been made.

Yet, we trust that the resolution have established a solid foundation to advance the cause of human rights. In this regard, we must not forget that the responsibility rests with the states. Their commitment to build on the strengths of the former Commission and put to life important innovations to overcome the identified loopholes and shortcomings will be of vital importance. Speaking in the context of the general reforms of the United Nations, we are convinced that the effective and efficient Human Rights Council will contribute to strengthening credibility and legitimacy of the entire UN system.

Mr. President,

From the outset, the Republic of Macedonia has joint those who advocated a Council equipped with the status, mandate, structures and membership necessary to give human rights the central role foreseen by the Charter. The inclusiveness, non-selectivity, dialogue and cooperation should be the fundamental principles in the Council's work. We consider it necessary to solemnly try to avoid the stereotypes of the past. A fresh start is not possible with old habits. The work of the Council, which starts today, must not be confined to reaction, but focused on prevention. It must provide states with guidance and assistance to reach highest human rights standards. Human rights crises must be addressed promptly and effectively. The same applies to long standing human rights violations. As I have stressed earlier, the UN GA Resolution 60/251 provides solid elements to boost our inventiveness in regard to our engagement on human rights issues.

The universal periodic review is a new mechanism we all take pride in. In order to be effective, it must be developed as a true mechanism for cooperation between the Council and the respective country, based on interactive dialogue with and full involvement of the country concerned. It must have an effective follow-up mechanism essential to its proper functioning. The approach to the development of UPR modalities

must be flexible but structured, involving all stakeholders in a transparent consultation process.

We must be practical and result-oriented in regard to the system of special procedures, which is one of the main accomplishments of the former Commission. The review must endeavor to improve and strengthen this valuable set of tools.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The Human Rights Commission has been exposed to much criticism over the last years. On this occasion we must once again recall the historic achievements of the Commission in a number of fields, such as special procedures I have just mentioned, and standard setting. However it failed to translate the developed set of human rights protection norms on the ground. That will be one of the main challenges of the Council. We, the states, must not fail. Because the Council will be strong and effective to the extent we make it so.

Mr. President,

The Republic of Macedonia is strongly committed to the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms on national, regional and international levels. Human rights and freedoms are one of the fundamental values of the Constitution of the Republic of Macedonia and as such one of the key pillars of Macedonia's foreign policy.

Macedonia is working hard on its EU and NATO integration agenda. Although under pressure of transition, at times turbulent regional environment, and internal problems, we have managed to keep the question of protection and promotion of human rights on the top of our agenda and to make substantial, visible progress. We are aware that there is no place for self-complacency where human rights are concerned and therefore are committed to continue to work hard on our human rights agenda.

You may recollect that in 2001 we had a crisis which we have overcome through a dialogue resulting in a signing of the Ohrid Framework Agreement. The process of comprehensive constitutional and legislative reforms followed which ensured additional guarantees for the rights of persons belonging to different ethnic communities. In only a few years we have managed to make Macedonia a functional multi-ethnic society.

However, in addition to advancing the anti-discrimination framework, we have in parallel embarked on other important reforms strengthening human rights protection, such as the reform of the judiciary, criminal and civil legislation and many others.

Certainly, the support and assistance coming from our friends in the accomplishment of our set goals should not be forgotten.

Mr. President,

Guided by our commitment to contribute to the protection and promotion of human rights globally, the Republic of Macedonia has decided to put forward its candidature for the membership of the Human Rights Council for the period 2009 - 2012. It would be an honor and privilege for us to serve on this important body and to contribute to the work of the Council by offering our experience in promoting human rights, democracy and the rule of law.

The Republic of Macedonia is determined to uphold the highest standards of human rights and pledges to engage with others in effective implementation of universal human rights standards. The Council is a body to engage states of various sizes and

experiences under condition of full commitment to and implementation of the universal human rights standards we all agreed to.

In conclusion Mr. President, let me underline that we have high expectations and enormous workload ahead of us. Based on the commitment to making a real difference demonstrated in our work so far, I am confident that the constructive spirit will prevail. It is our duty and moral obligation to our citizens, and first and foremost to victims of human rights violations worldwide.

Thank you.