

*First Session of  
Human Rights Council*

\*\*\*\*\*

*High level Segment*

\*\*\*\*\*

*Statement of the Honourable  
Madan Murlidhar DULLOO  
Minister of Foreign Affairs, International  
Trade & Cooperation  
of the Republic of Mauritius*

Geneva, 19 June 2006

*Please check against delivery*

**Human Rights Council**

**Address by the Honourable Madan Murlidhar Dulloo, Minister of Foreign Affairs,  
International Trade and Cooperation of the Republic of Mauritius at First Session of the**

**Human Rights Council (High Level Segment)**

**19<sup>th</sup> June 2006**

**Mr. President,**

It is a distinct honour for my delegation to participate in the deliberations of the First Session of the Human rights Council. The inauguration of the Human Rights Council should mark a turning point in the history of the United Nations.

Let me first congratulate you, Mr. President, on your election to the chair of the Council. I would also like to congratulate all members of the Council and members of the Bureau for their election. I should thank all those who have made this day possible, more particularly the Secretary-General of the United Nations, the President of the General Assembly, the High Commissioner for Human Rights and you, Mr. President. My delegation would like to assure you all of its full cooperation towards the successful conclusion of our work.

**Mr. President,**

We, members of the Human Rights Council, have been entrusted with important responsibilities by the General Assembly. We therefore look forward to working closely together to ensure that the Council functions effectively to attain our high objectives.

**Mr. President,**

General Assembly resolution 60/251 is a landmark agreement in the history of the United Nations. Besides bringing a new dimension to the role of the UN in the defence and promotion of Human Rights, it represents a major step in implementing the Reform Agenda of the UN.

The process leading to the adoption of resolution 60/251 has been an opportunity to witness the seriousness and high sense of responsibility of the international community on Human

Rights. Our common determination to succeed in reforming the United Nations institutional set-up for promoting and protecting fundamental rights has led to the creation of the Human Rights Council. Members of the Council now have a primary responsibility to ensure that this newly-created institution functions effectively with the collaboration of all stakeholders.

**Mr. President,**

Since 1948, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights remains the internationally recognized benchmark for fundamental rights across the world. The Commission on Human Rights, for its part, has served the promotion and protection of fundamental rights for almost 60 years. It has a commendable record but in the course of time, like many UN bodies, it had become necessary to revisit it with a view to responding more adequately to the needs of the international community in the fields of Human Rights.

Mauritius fully appreciates that the process leading to the creation of the Human Rights Council has been comprehensive and inclusive, ensuring broad acceptance by the international community. The Council is designed to incorporate the best features of the Commission on Human Rights while developing the new and innovative tools set out in General Assembly resolution 60/251. Its purpose is to reinvigorate the United Nations machinery for the promotion and protection of fundamental freedoms around the world, dealing more objectively and more credibly with Human Rights violations worldwide.

**Mr. President,**

Mauritius fully appreciates that the Human Rights Council will not only strengthen the UN machinery to become a principal organ as hoped by many of us, but it will also build the capacity of Member States to enable them to comply with their Human Rights obligations to ensure the well-being and dignity of their citizens. Moreover, recognizing that mutual understanding is an important condition for achieving respect for the fundamental rights of every person, General Assembly resolution 60/251 emphasizes the need for dialogue among civilisations, cultures and religions. Mauritius prides itself in being designated as a privileged land for the dialogue among civilisations, cultures and religions.

We believe that the pursuit of Human Rights does not necessarily need to be a confrontational process. By promoting co-operation and dialogue, the Council will aim to build a feeling of common ownership of the Human Rights mission of the United Nations.

Mauritius will work with members of the Council to avoid the pitfalls of the Commission on Human Rights, namely, politicisation and double standards. Credibility, objectivity and effectiveness in promoting Human Rights and in addressing violations need to be the norms of the Council's work. The expectations of the international community in this respect are high and we cannot afford to miss this opportunity of making a fresh start.

**Mr. President,**

To effectively carry out the responsibilities of the United Nations in the field of Human Rights, the Council will have new tools and more time than the preceding system. Mauritius holds the view that clear procedures and methods of work have to be established at the very outset to ensure the Council's effectiveness, especially with regard to the new aspects such as the Universal Periodic Review Mechanism.

The Universal Periodic Review Mechanism has been designed to protect the new system from selectivity and to ensure that no State or government is above the law. We should be careful to ensure that enough of the Council's resources, including time, are devoted to the Review Mechanism. States under review must also be granted the necessary assistance to prepare themselves and to undertake reforms recommended by the Council. Human Rights education, technical assistance and capacity-building to promote Human Rights must be given due attention. Furthermore, we need to ensure that the Council acts on the basis of credible information. These elements will help the international community, especially States facing a particular human rights situation, to perceive the Council as a friendly institution whose intention is to accompany each State towards the enjoyment of fundamental rights by all human beings.

**Mr. President,**

My delegation recommends the establishment, as a matter of priority, of the modalities for the Universal Periodic Review to enable the mechanism to start its activities at the earliest. We

need to make arrangements for the essential aspects of the existing Human Rights mechanisms to be carried out in the meantime and to ensure a smooth transition. We must also define the channels of communication and concertation with other UN organisations, notably the General Assembly at earliest.

**Mr. President,**

This First session of the Human Rights Council is of very critical importance. The decisions we will be making will determine the overall credibility and usefulness of the Council. I would therefore suggest that over the coming days we all do our utmost to avoid what has hampered our common pursuit in favour of Human Rights in the past: politicisation. We will need to display self-restraint and flexibility, starting with the contents of the agenda.

The Council has been called to review, improve and rationalise all the mandates, mechanisms, functions and responsibilities of the Commission of Human Rights within the next year. We have a tremendous and challenging task ahead and time is of the essence. We need to agree on a comprehensive yet realistic programme of work for the first sessions. It is important that both the agenda and the programme of work are drafted in a manner that will allow for predictability, flexibility and transparency. They should also enable the Council to respond promptly to human rights emergency situations.

My delegation, Mr. President, stands ready to cooperate with all stakeholders towards this end. We are confident that our work will succeed through constructive dialogue and cooperation.

**Mr. President,**

Human Rights remain a constant priority for Mauritius at both the national and international levels. Since we became an independent nation, the respect of Human Rights is enshrined in our Constitution. Our national legislations specifically provide for the protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms. Mauritius disposes of a system of courts where the independence of the judiciary is guaranteed. The separation of powers and the rule of law prevail. A National Human Rights Commission has been set up with powers of inquiry, and it functions independently. Our civil society is also constantly on the alert on Human Rights

issues affecting individuals in Mauritius. NGOs express themselves freely and participate or intervene in the decision making process.

**Mr. President,**

My country is party to the core international human rights instruments and we are proud to be among the first twenty countries which have ratified the Optional Protocol of the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment. The Optional Protocol will enter into force on 22 June 2006 and we would wish to encourage all States Parties to the UN Convention against Torture, which have not yet adhered to this instrument, to demonstrate the political will and determination to prevent torture by ratifying the Optional Protocol.

In the same vein, Mr. President, we would like to emphasise that, in an age of real and perceived threats of terrorism, legitimate security concerns should not undermine the fundamental rights and guarantees enshrined in international human rights instruments and international law. Fight against terrorism and the promotion of human rights are in fact mutually reinforcing.

**Mr. President,**

Mauritius is honoured to be entrusted with the responsibility of membership of the Human Rights Council. In accordance with the voluntary pledges and commitments we made when we presented our candidacy for membership of the Council, Mauritius will continue to strive to uphold and ensure the highest standards in the promotion and protection of Human Rights.

My delegation will participate actively in the work of the Council for the promotion and protection of fundamental rights everywhere in a spirit of impartiality, objectivity, non-selectivity, constructive dialogue and cooperation. Our motivation is to contribute towards the enjoyment of Human Rights by each and every individual of our planet.

**Thank you, Mr. President.**

---