

# REPUBLIC OF POLAND

PERMANENT MISSION TO THE OFFICE  
OF THE UNITED NATIONS AT GENEVA



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**Statement**

**by**

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**at**

**the High Level Segment  
of  
the 1<sup>st</sup> Session of the Human Rights Council**

**Geneva, 20 June 2006**

Mr. Chairman,  
Excellencies,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I wish to start by congratulating Ambassador de Alba on his election to the Chair of the Council. My congratulation goes also to all members of the Council and members of the Bureau. My delegation would like to assure all of you of its full cooperation towards the successful work of this body.

We are witnessing a historic moment. The Human Rights Council by the inauguration of its work opens a new chapter in the activity of the United Nations in the field of human rights. We all agree that human rights observance must be improved and those responsible for their mass violations can no longer enjoy impunity.

The decisions taken last September during the UN Summit initiated reforms of the entire Organization. The measures related to human rights included in the Outcome Document are, without doubt, among its greatest successes. The most important was the reaffirmation of three parallel objectives of the United Nations system, where human rights, alongside development and security are interlinked and mutually reinforcing. Another breakthrough came with the recognition of the principle of responsibility to protect – which translates into a duty of every state and international community to protect the individuals against the most severe violations of human rights. The determination of states to improve the UN human rights system was further demonstrated by the decision to replace the Commission on Human Rights with the Human Rights Council and to strengthen the Office of High Commissioner for Human Rights.

It was up to the UN Summit to make the Council a more powerful body, well anchored in the structure of the UN, and with greater influence than its predecessor. It is up to us, the members of the Council, to ensure that it also becomes more credible, more effective, and more responsive to the actual needs of people.

In this context, we welcome the fact that all the states, which were elected to the Council, have made voluntary pledges and commitments to observe human rights and to uphold the highest human rights standards. This will surely enhance the credibility of their actions within the Council.

Mr. Chairman,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

The Council has a fundamental role to play in the protection and promotion of human rights. It is supposed to avert serious violations of human rights, and when they do occur – to respond expeditiously and effectively. Mass violations of human rights can cause thousands of casualties, directly undermining the foundations of peace and security. They can also lead to dramatic regression in social progress, which is affecting entire regions.

Another important task for the Council will be to serve as a forum of dialogue to identify structural obstacles undermining human rights, and to elaborate ways to eradicate them.

Furthermore, as the High Commissioner for Human Rights stated in her Plan of Action, we expect that the Council will bring about empowerment of rights holders and duty bearers. In



order to achieve this, it is essential to build viable national systems of human rights protection based on the rule of law, democracy and good governance. The Council should stimulate cooperation in this respect. The effectiveness of that cooperation will be measured by the situation of the right's holders *vis a vis* the representatives of state authorities - the duty bearers according to international human rights standards.

The Council has been equipped with a variety of tools to implement its mission. They prominently include human rights mainstreaming, with regard both to UN programs and agencies, and relations with the Security Council and the ECOSOC.

The strength of the Council will also depend on the good cooperation with other partners – mainly NGOs. Poland, as a member of the Council, will be seeking ways to enhance this cooperation based on mutual understanding, trust and common goals.

As determined by the General Assembly resolution 60/251, it is one of the most urgent tasks of the Council to elaborate the modalities of the universal periodic review assessing the fulfillment of human rights commitments by member states. This process is to be conducted within twelve months. We urge the Council to tackle this task as soon as possible. Realizing how important it is to blaze the trail in this area, Poland hereby pledges its readiness to be subjected to this procedure immediately upon its adoption.

Furthermore, the review of special procedures inherited by the Council from the Commission on Human Rights should be concluded sooner than within twelve months envisaged in the resolution. That would send a very positive signal that the Council intends to be an effective and efficient organ.

Mr. Chairman,  
Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Poland wants to play an active role in endowing the Human Rights Council with suitable prestige and effectiveness, achieving this through inter- and supra-regional cooperation on key human rights issues.

Supplementing the European Union priorities identified earlier in the statement of the Austrian Presidency – which Poland fully supports – I would like to present briefly Polish priorities.

As I have already underlined, it is up to us whether the Council will be credible, effective, and sensitive to people need's. We have the necessary instruments in the form of the impressive system of treaties and human rights soft law. We have a well-developed system of protection institutions. And then we have innumerable pledges of good will – both by individual states and international community. On the other hand, there is this perception fatigue of getting used to reports of yet more mass killings, forced migration, torture, rape and racially-motivated attacks. We tend to become more indifferent while seeing ten-year-old children carrying rifles instead of school bags. Thus, it is a crucial challenge for us and for this Council to implement and to enforce human rights standards and instruments. This requires efforts in diverse fields: from building human rights knowledge and national and international protection capacities to human rights based international cooperation for development and solidarity.



Poland wants to work for strengthening the rule of law, democracy and good governance as fundamental for the protection of the rights of the individual, and ensuring sustainable development and security. We attach special significance to the idea of good governance, which we have promoted – along with other states – within the Commission on Human Rights. Good governance is both: a method and a tool for the implementation of effective, well-executed and transparent policies. It is a means to counteract the abuse of democracy, violations of human rights, corruption, misuse public funds and foreign aid, organized crime, poverty and epidemics – this list could be much longer.

Another topic we consider important is the protection of the rights of vulnerable groups, including victims of racial discrimination, people infected with HIV/AIDS, as well as national and ethnic minorities.

We share the view that the new body should adopt a new philosophy: it should abandon confrontation and mutual lecturing and focus on dialog, cooperation and exchange of experience. We are deeply committed to such an approach. Dialog should be the foundation of our work during the session. However, it must lead to concrete results, laying the groundwork for authentic progress. For that reason, our priorities prominently include dialog and assistance in building national systems of human rights protection, especially in countries in transition.

Mr. Chairman,  
Ladies and Gentleman,

We all face the great challenge of giving new momentum to the protection and promotion of human rights. There are different ways of characterizing this moment. From the point of view of victims of human rights violations - time is crucial. My compatriot, the Polish lawyer Rafał Lemkin, became the initiator and a tireless promotor of the Convention on the prevention and punishment of the crime of genocide. He once explained his impatience at the slow pace of work on the convention by pointing out that you could hardly expect patience from a victim with a rope around his neck.

Thus, as we proceed with deliberation, we should be aware of this reality: there is no time to waste.

Thank you for your attention.