

THE REPUBLIC OF

KOREA

PERMANENT MISSION

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Statement

by

**H.E. Mr. Ban Ki-moon
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at

**High-Level Segment
the 1st Session of the Human Rights Council**

**Geneva
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Mr. President, Madam High Commissioner, Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

It gives me great honor and pleasure to join you in this historic gathering. I would like to begin by offering you, Mr. President, my sincerest congratulations on your election as President of this, the first Session of the Human Rights Council. I wish you and the members of the Bureau every success as you steer the Council in the founding year.

Mr. President,

With the launching of the Human Rights Council today, human rights has found its proper place as one of the three pillars of the UN's work. The enhanced prominence is the result of the universal acknowledgement that peace and development cannot be fully enjoyed or realized without respect for human rights.

The experience of the Republic of Korea demonstrates that the three pillars of the United Nations, namely, peace and stability, development, and the promotion of human rights and democracy are all mutually reinforcing and interdependent.

We have every expectation that this new body will prove to be stronger, more effective and efficient than its predecessor. In many ways, the work we do this year will be pivotal to the evolution of the Council, and more importantly to the protection of human rights for many generations to come. The significance of our work cannot be understated.

Mr. President,

The Commission on Human Rights left behind a rich legacy that we must build upon. Notwithstanding the criticism that had been levied at the Commission in recent years, its commendable record warrants our deep respect.

For sixty years, the Commission has served to advance human rights around the world by establishing global norms, setting the agenda, identifying challenges, promoting dialogue, assisting in capacity-building, and protecting vulnerable groups against serious human rights violations.

Indeed, for decades since giving humanity the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948, the Commission was the home of human rights, and the beacon of hope around the world for greater human dignity and freedom. Undoubtedly, it became fatigued and unable to deliver towards its

final years. But we must honor its overall history, learn from its accomplishments as well as its mistakes, as we now move on to a new chapter in the history of human rights.

Mr. President,

A new start is always pregnant with promises. But the promises will not materialize without the will and cooperation of all concerned. With the launching of the Human Rights Council, we stand at a new start for human rights. What is required now is the full commitment and conjoined efforts of all who aspire to make human rights a bond that binds humanity rather than a barrier that divides us.

In this regard, the inaugural members of the Council have a heavy responsibility. Working with all members of the United Nations, we must generate an earnest spirit of cooperation and common purpose in laying the foundations for the Council's work in the years and decades ahead. Dialogue, cooperation and engagement must be our dictate.

There are, I believe, a few principles that should guide us as we begin this important endeavor.

First, we must be unswerving in our commitment, as reaffirmed by our leaders at the World Summit last year, to making human rights the third and equal pillar of the United Nations, along with peace and security and development. The Council must see to it that promoting and protecting human rights is integrated into the whole spectrum of UN activities.

Second, we must renew our efforts for a full and more effective implementation of the existing human rights norms. Resolutions and treaties are meaningless unless implemented on the ground with tangible results.

In this context, the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) will be a vital tool for the Council. The UPR must do more than to simply review and criticize. It must also help to build capacity in each member state. It must identify areas where there is need of international assistance in fulfilling their human rights obligations.

Given the importance of the UPR, I hope that we will be able to reach an early decision on its modalities. On this point, I would emphasize that the UPR should be objective and transparent with consistent follow-up. It should be complementary, not overlapping, with the existing human rights mechanisms, such as the special procedures and treaty bodies.

Third, the Council, which will meet throughout the year, should promptly and effectively respond to urgent human rights situations. It must not repeat the inertia of the Commission in its final years. Indeed, in large measure, the credibility of the Council will depend on its ability to rally global action against gross violations of human rights. Making the most of the services of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, the Council must assure the world that it stands alert against the outbreak of forces that would negate sixty years of painstaking progress in human rights.

Fourth, the Council should build upon the practice of the Commission in incorporating the active participation of all major stakeholders in its work, including civil society, national human rights commissions, and other UN bodies. Inclusiveness is central to the idea of human rights. It must also continue to be the hallmark of the Council's work on behalf of human rights for all.

Fifth, in carrying out the work of the Council, there needs to be more frequent interaction and dialogue with the High Commissioner. Her annual reports and briefing can provide balanced and objective input in furthering the cause of human rights. I commend the High Commissioner for the great dedication and vigor she has brought to the work, and look forward to a more active leadership on her part.

Mr. President,

The Council is also expected to sustain the international community's critical attention on the human rights track records in certain parts of the world. In this regard, I note the concerns over the human rights situation in the DPRK. The Government of the Republic of Korea fully shares the concerns, and has conveyed them during the inter-Korean ministerial talks.

We call upon the DPRK to engage in human rights dialogue with the international community that would lead to technical and institutional cooperation. Such dialogue, cooperation and engagement, I believe, are the steps toward tangible improvements in the DPRK and elsewhere where human rights are an on-going concern of the global community.

Mr. President,

Making the Human Rights Council a fair and effective body is a shared and inescapable responsibility that rests on all our shoulders. We must embrace national and regional particularities as well as historical and cultural diversities as we pull together to make the new Council work. But the most vital element, I believe, is a renewed conviction that human rights and fundamental freedoms are universal values, the pursuit of which unites us all.

The Republic of Korea places much hope in the Council, and stands ready to fully cooperate with others in nurturing it into a thriving forum for genuine dialogue and effective promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms. The path ahead remains for all of us to chart together. Thank you.