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HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL
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IMPLEMENTATION OF GENERAL ASSEMBLY RESOLUTION 60/251 OF 15 MARCH 2006 ENTITLED “HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL”

Written statement* submitted by the United Nations Association of China (UNA-China), a non governmental organization in general consultative status

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[16 June 2006]

* This written statement is issued, unedited, in the language(s) received from the submitting non-governmental organization(s).

Human Rights Council: Opportunities and Challenges

The United Nations Association of China joins the international community in welcoming the creation of the UN Human Rights Council, a new international mechanism for the promotion and protection of human rights. The UN Secretary-General Kofi Anan heralded the Council as a “new beginning” for human rights and the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights deemed it as a “very encouraging sign”.

The Council has undoubtedly offered the international community new opportunities in its endeavour to promote and protect the rights of the world people. While adopting Resolution 60/251, the General Assembly reaffirmed a number of important guiding principles to be observed in the future work of the Council: “universality, impartiality, objectivity and non-selectivity as well as constructive international dialogue and cooperation among civilizations, cultures and religions”.

The first historic session of the Council on June 19 is an important milestone for the UN and a good opportunity to correct the failures of the discredited and now-defunct Human Rights Commission. The powers and functions of the Council are only a part of the reform process. The largest determinant will be the willingness of States to change their own mindset and to empower the Council to act in accordance with its mandate. The change of the name, status, structure or composition does not necessarily means the change of the spirit guiding the work of the Council and the way human rights issues are addressed. The root causes of credibility deficit of the Commission, which is characterized by politicization, confrontation, double standards and selectivity, should be stamped out. And the new Council will become a replica of the Commission unless the past mentality and practice change.

UNA-China would like to emphasize that all human rights, both civil and political and economic, social and cultural rights, including the right to development are interlinked and equally important, and that genuine interactive dialogue and cooperation in the field of human rights should be promoted.

The first year is a decisive year for the Council. It is the hope of UNA-China that the Council will develop its architecture and set its priorities and conduct a serious review of the work of the Commission, e.g. what to carry forward and what to redress and rationalize, so that the Council will take on a truly new look.

While the 47 member States of the new Council will be the ultimate decision-makers, other States, international organizations, NGOs and national human rights institutions are essential participants too. UNA-China is ready to work with other stakeholders to build a stronger institution than the Commission on Human Rights and make the Council more effective and more credible.

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