



# General Assembly

Sixty-eighth session

**52<sup>nd</sup>** plenary meeting  
 Wednesday, 13 November 2013, 10 a.m.  
 New York

Official Records

*President:* Mr. Ashe ..... (Antigua and Barbuda)

*The meeting was called to order at 10 a.m.*

## Agenda item 116

### Appointments to fill vacancies in subsidiary organs and other appointments

#### (a) Appointment of members of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions

##### Report of the Fifth Committee (A/68/557)

**The President:** The Fifth Committee recommends, in paragraph 4 of its report, that the General Assembly appoint the following persons as members of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions for a three-year term of office beginning on 1 January 2014: Mr. Toshihiro Aiki (Japan), Mr. Richard Moon (United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland), Mr. Carlos Ruiz Massieu (Mexico), Mr. Devesh Uttam (India), Ms. Catherine Vendat (France) and Mr. Zhang Wanhai (China).

May I take it that it is the wish of the Assembly to appoint those persons as members of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions for a three-year term of office beginning on 1 January 2014?

*It was so decided.*

#### (b) Appointment of members of the Committee on Contributions

##### Report of the Fifth Committee (A/68/558)

**The President:** The Fifth Committee recommends, in paragraph 4 of its report, that the General Assembly appoint the following persons as members of the Committee on Contributions for a three-year term of office beginning on 1 January 2014: Mr. Ali A. Ali Kurer (Libya), Mr. Jean Pierre Diawara (Guinea), Mr. Gordon Eckersley (Australia), Mr. Bernardo Greiver del Hoyo (Uruguay), Mr. Pedro Luis Pedroso Cuesta (Cuba) and Mr. Ugo Sessi (Italy).

May I take it that it is the wish of the Assembly to appoint those persons as members of the Committee on Contributions for a three-year term of office beginning on 1 January 2014?

*It was so decided.*

#### (c) Confirmation of members of the Investments Committee

##### Report of the Fifth Committee (A/68/559)

**The President:** The Fifth Committee recommends, in paragraph 5 of its report, that the General Assembly confirm the reappointment by the Secretary-General of Mr. Simon Jiang (China) and Mr. Achim Kassow (Germany) as regular members of the Investments Committee for a three-year term of office beginning on 1 January 2014, and the appointment of Mr. Ivan Pictet (Switzerland) and Mr. Michael Klein (United States of

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the interpretation of speeches delivered in the other languages. Corrections should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room U-506. Corrections will be issued after the end of the session in a consolidated corrigendum.

13-56114 (E)



Accessible document

Please recycle



America) as regular members for a one-year term of office beginning on 1 January 2014.

May I take it that it is the wish of the Assembly to confirm the reappointment by the Secretary-General of Mr. Simon Jiang (China) and Mr. Achim Kassow (Germany) as regular members of the Investments Committee for a three-year term of office beginning on 1 January 2014, and the appointment of Mr. Ivan Pictet (Switzerland) and Mr. Michael Klein (United States of America) as regular members for a one-year term of office beginning on 1 January 2014?

*It was so decided.*

**The President:** The Fifth Committee also recommends, in paragraph 6 of its report, that the General Assembly reappoint Mr. Gumersindo Oliveros (Spain) as an ad hoc member of the Investments Committee for a one-year term of office beginning 1 January 2014.

May I take it that it is the wish of the Assembly to reappoint Mr. Gumersindo Oliveros as an ad hoc member of the Investments Committee for a one-year term of office beginning 1 January 2014?

*It was so decided.*

**(d) Appointment of a member of the Board of Auditors**

**Report of the Fifth Committee (A/68/560)**

**The President:** The Fifth Committee recommends, in paragraph 5 of its report, that the General Assembly appoint the Comptroller and Auditor-General of India as a member of the Board of Auditors for a six-year term of office beginning on 1 July 2014.

May I take it that it is the wish of the Assembly to appoint the Comptroller and Auditor-General of India as a member of the Board of Auditors for a six-year term of office beginning on 1 July 2014?

*It was so decided.*

**(e) Appointment of members of the International Civil Service Commission**

**Report of the Fifth Committee (A/68/561)**

**The President:** The Fifth Committee recommends, in paragraph 5 of its report, that the General Assembly appoint the following persons as members of the International Civil Service Commission for a four-year

term of office beginning on 1 January 2014: Mr. Minoru Endo (Japan), Mr. Luis Mariano Hermosillo (Mexico), Mr. Aldo Mantovani (Italy), Mr. Curtis Smith (United States of America) and Mr. Wolfgang Stöckl (Germany).

May I take it that it is the wish of the Assembly to appoint those persons as members of the International Civil Service Commission for a four-year term of office beginning on 1 January 2014?

*It was so decided.*

**The President:** The Fifth Committee also recommends, in paragraph 5 of its report, that the General Assembly designate Mr. Wolfgang Stöckl (Germany) as Vice-Chair of the International Civil Service Commission for a four-year term of office beginning on 1 January 2014.

May I take it that it is the wish of the Assembly to designate Mr. Wolfgang Stöckl (Germany) as Vice-Chair of the International Civil Service Commission for a four-year term of office beginning on 1 January 2014?

*It was so decided.*

**(f) Appointment of members of the Independent Audit Advisory Committee**

**Report of the Fifth Committee (A/68/562)**

**The President:** The Fifth Committee recommends, in paragraph 5 of its report, that the General Assembly appoint Ms. Natalia A. Bocharova (Russian Federation) as a member of the Independent Audit Advisory Committee for a three-year term of office beginning on 1 January 2014.

May I take it that it is the wish of the Assembly to appoint Ms. Natalia A. Bocharova (Russian Federation) as a member of the Independent Audit Advisory Committee for a three-year term of office beginning on 1 January 2014?

*It was so decided.*

May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to conclude its consideration of sub-items (a) to (f) of agenda item 116?

*It was so decided.*

## Agenda item 64

### Report of the Human Rights Council

#### Report of the Human Rights Council (A/68/53 and Add.1)

**The President:** The addendum to the report of the Human Rights Council covering the Council's twenty-fourth session, held from 9 to 27 September 2013, is currently available in English only on the Council's website. The addendum will be circulated in all languages as soon as the translations are completed.

In connection with this item, I would like to recall that the General Assembly, at its 2nd plenary meeting, on 20 September 2013, decided to consider agenda item 64 in the plenary meeting and in the Third Committee, pursuant to resolution 65/281 of 17 June 2011.

In accordance with resolution 65/281 of 17 June 2011, I now give the floor to Mr. Remigiusz Achilles Henczel, President of the Human Rights Council.

**Mr. Henczel** (Poland), President of the Human Rights Council: It is with great pleasure and honour that I come before the General Assembly today to introduce the annual report of the Human Rights Council (A/68/53 and Add.1) to the Assembly. I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate the newly elected members of the Council and to wish them a successful term.

The year 2013 marks the seventh year since the establishment of the Human Rights Council, which has achieved significant progress in dealing with human rights issues in different parts of the world.

Syria continued to be high on the agenda of the Council throughout the year, and the mandate of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic was extended again. The Council also established a commission of inquiry to investigate the systematic, widespread and grave violations of human rights in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, with a view to ensuring full accountability, in particular where those violations may amount to crimes against humanity. The Council also extended existing special procedures mandates on the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Myanmar, Iran, Belarus and Eritrea.

I would like to underline the creativity demonstrated by the Council with regard to its methods of work, which has greatly facilitated the dialogue of countries concerned with the Council. Two interactive

dialogues, one on the Central African Republic and the other on Somalia, were held with the participation of the Minister of Justice and Judicial Reform and the Minister of Territorial Administration, Decentralization and Regionalization of the Central African Republic and the Prime Minister of Somalia. Those dialogues were held at the initiative of the countries concerned themselves, which were welcomed by the Council for their commitment and willingness to address serious human rights concerns in an international forum.

A number of other country-specific resolutions were also adopted within the framework of technical cooperation and capacity-building, including on Cambodia, the Central African Republic, Côte d'Ivoire, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Guinea, Haiti, Libya, Mali, Somalia, South Sudan, the Sudan and Yemen.

At this juncture, I should highlight the important role of the regular update, at the beginning of each Council session, by the High Commissioner for Human Rights on developments in the world and the numerous reports presented, including on Mali, Guinea, Afghanistan, Libya, Colombia, Guatemala, Bolivia, Cyprus, Iran, Sri Lanka and Yemen, among others, which have tremendously contributed to the deliberations of the Council.

During its past three regular sessions, among other debates, the Council held a total of 13 panel discussions on themes such as the impact of corruption on human rights, the contribution of parliaments to the work of the Council and its universal periodic review, business and human rights, democracy and the rule of law, the human rights of children of parents sentenced to the death penalty or executed, gender integration, indigenous peoples, the rights of children, and the rights of persons with disabilities, as well as the promotion of technical cooperation in the area of the administration of justice.

The Council also held high-level panel discussions to mark the twentieth anniversary of the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action, during which we heard a video address by the Secretary-General. The discussion focused on the implementation of the Vienna Declaration and a review of the achievements, best practices and challenges in that regard. In addition, this year's high-level panel on human rights mainstreaming, with heads and the senior officials of United Nations agencies, focused on human rights and the post-2015 development agenda, with a particular

focus on the right to education. The participation of the Secretary-General in the panel demonstrated his commitment to ensuring the integration of human rights in development efforts. The panels held throughout the year benefitted from the expertise and perspectives of panellists, including representatives of Governments, parliaments, human rights mechanisms, international and regional organizations, academia, civil society representing affected communities, United Nations agencies and journalists.

Finally, the Council established new special procedures mandates, both country and thematic, bringing the total number of mandates to 51. The new mandates include the Independent Expert on the enjoyment of all human rights by older persons, the independent expert on the situation of human rights in Mali and the Independent Expert on the situation of human rights in the Central African Republic.

In 2013, the Council adopted a total of 107 resolutions, decisions and President's statements. Also, the number of cross-regional initiatives continued to increase, underscoring the capacity of the Council to take action on important human rights issues by overcoming different political positions. For instance, the resolutions on local Government and human rights; on the elimination of child, early and forced marriages; on the role of the freedom of opinion and expression in women's empowerment; and on the question of the death penalty; as well as country-specific issues, were submitted by cross-regional groups of States. Many of the resolutions were adopted without a vote. At the September session, for instance, of 40 resolutions and decisions, 33 were adopted without a vote. That also demonstrates the increased capacity of the Council to agree on issues relating to the protection of those most in need. The number of cross-regional joint statements has also increased, covering a range of topics.

Let me now turn to the role of civil society in the proceedings of the Council. The active participation and contribution of civil society organizations is central to the work of the Human Rights Council and makes it a unique forum among United Nations intergovernmental organs. It is therefore essential that representatives of civil society operate in a free, open and safe environment that protects and promotes their own human rights. I have personally condemned acts of reprisal in the context of sessions of the Council and of the universal periodic review (UPR) and have repeatedly stated that any acts of intimidation or reprisal against individuals

or groups that cooperate or have cooperated with the United Nations and its representatives are unacceptable and must end.

It is the Council's and its President's responsibility to address in an effective manner all cases of intimidation or reprisal and to ensure unhindered access to all who seek to cooperate with United Nations mechanisms. In that regard, Human Rights Council resolution 24/24, on cooperation with the United Nations in the field of human rights, adopted last September, is of the utmost importance. It requests the Secretary-General, in cooperation with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), to designate a United Nations-wide senior focal point on reprisals and aims at promoting the prevention of, protection against and accountability for reprisals and intimidation related to cooperation with the United Nations.

I am also pleased to inform the Assembly that we have made some progress on the issue of making the work of the Council accessible to persons with disabilities pursuant to the legal obligations arising from the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and in line with the mandate given to the Council's task force on the issue. At every session of the Council, in addition to the annual panel on the rights of persons with disabilities, one panel was made accessible to disabled persons. At the most recent session of the Council in September, for example, the annual panel on the rights of indigenous peoples, which focused on the World Conference on Indigenous Peoples, was made accessible to persons with disabilities through the provision of international sign language interpretation, captioning and a webcast of the session. We at the Council remain committed through the task force to share best practices on accessibility. The task force will continue to report to the Council on progress on the issue.

Let me now make a few remarks relating to the universal periodic review. We are now firmly engaged in the second cycle of the UPR, and the process continues to receive positive feedback from all stakeholders involved. However, I must point out that we have faced a number of challenges in, for example, upholding the principle of universality by ensuring the participation of all States and in avoiding that issues of a bilateral, territorial nature have a negative impact on the process. Furthermore, it is my firm conviction that, by applying all existing practices and rules in a

consistent manner to all States under review, we will contribute to strengthening the UPR's credibility and to a successful second cycle of the review, taking into account one of its principles, namely, that of the equal treatment of all States under review.

I wish to acknowledge the fact that the constructive, consensual and non-politicized approach maintained by the Council throughout this year has encouraged Israel to re-engage with the UPR. I welcome Israel's re-engagement, as it upholds the integrity and the universality of that important process.

Universal participation is essential to the process, and many among the participants today have been involved in ensuring the presence of delegations from countries far away from Geneva and without a Permanent Mission in that city. I would like to thank them for their efforts. In that regard, I participated in the interregional seminar to facilitate the participation of least developed countries (LDCs) and small island developing States (SIDS) in the Human Rights Council and its universal periodic review, which was held on 30 and 31 July in Mauritius. That was the first time that such a seminar was organized. It focused on facilitating the participation of small island developing States and least developed countries in the work of the Human Rights Council and its universal periodic review mechanism. Participants in the two-day seminar included 23 delegates from 14 LDCs or SIDS. During the seminar, they received comprehensive information and tools on the Human Rights Council and its subsidiary mechanisms, particularly the UPR. I take this opportunity to thank the Government of Mauritius for hosting the seminar and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) for having successfully organized the event.

Before I conclude, I would like to touch briefly upon the significant challenges the Human Rights Council is facing in terms of resources required for it to continue its activities. As I said earlier, the Council continues to adopt a high number of resolutions and decisions, giving rise to new mandates for Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights to implement, carrying significant resource implications. Indeed, while the OHCHR is requested to comply with an increasing number of mandates stemming from the Council's decisions, its regular budget has not kept pace with that growth. The OHCHR therefore often has to rely on voluntary contributions to implement mandated activities. Although I am fully aware of the current

financial situation, I would like to seek the cooperation and support of all Member States to address the issue, through the Fifth Committee, by positively considering options on how to address the funding of new mandates arising from resolutions and decisions of the Council.

I have held the presidency since January 2013 and will end my term at the end of this year. I would like to conclude by assuring the General Assembly of my commitment to see a successful transfer of the presidency to my successor. I hope that the Assembly will continue to provide its full and efficient support to the Council during its eighth cycle. On behalf of my successor, I would like to welcome all members to the twenty-fifth session of the Council, to be held in Geneva in March 2014.

**Mrs. Bibalou** (Gabon): I have the honour to deliver this statement on behalf of the Group of African States.

The African Group welcomes the President of the Human Rights Council, His Excellency Mr. Remigiusz Achilles Henczel, and wishes to extend its appreciation for this opportunity to hold a dialogue on the activities of the Council during its seventh cycle as set out in the report of the Human Rights Council (A/68/53). We also welcome the President's leadership of that body throughout the year.

The African Group wishes to reaffirm the Council's mandate, as contained in resolution 60/251, in promoting universal respect for the protection of all human rights and fundamental freedoms for all, without distinction of any kind and in a fair and equal manner, and to make recommendations thereon. It is on that basis that the Group has consistently supported the work of the Council.

The Group views the principles underpinning the Council's mandate as important, particularly with respect to the principle of cooperation and genuine dialogue aimed at strengthening the capacity of Member States to comply with their human rights obligations. It is therefore incumbent upon the Council in discharging its mandate to firmly ground its work on universality, objectivity and non-selectivity in the consideration of human rights issues.

There is no doubt that the universal periodic review (UPR) remains the most distinct mechanism of universal application to assist States in fulfilling their human rights obligations. In our view, that mechanism remains relevant and key as it concerns the promotion and protection of human rights. It is therefore critical

that the United Nations voluntary fund for financial and technical assistance for the implementation of the UPR be properly resourced for the purpose of assisting States to develop their national capacity and expertise for the implementation of recommendations.

The Group reiterates its support for the mechanisms and special procedures of the Council and the important work they undertake in the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms.

In recent times, the Council has faced governance challenges, particularly with respect to the erosion of the provisions of the institution-building package, which is the solid foundation on which its mandate rests. The Group is concerned that the erosion could, in the long run, present credibility gaps in its work.

While the Group has also noted the immense work that the Council engages in at each session, the challenges presented by a shortage of funding remains unresolved. The African Group believes, therefore, that those funding shortages will affect the implementation of the decisions and resolutions of the Council. We also wish to recognize the key role played by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, as the secretariat of the Council, in ensuring that appropriate support is given to the Council in line with the framework of resolution 48/141.

The annual report (A/68/53) submitted to the General Assembly presents a comprehensive picture of the deliberations that have taken place during the Council's seventh cycle year. The Group is also cognizant of the provisions of paragraph 5 of resolution 60/251, which provides for recommendations to be made by the Council to the Third Committee, hence its support for the universal membership of the General Assembly to deliberate on those important matters.

The African Group believes that Human Rights Council resolution 24/24, adopted during its twenty-fourth session in September, makes critical recommendations to the General Assembly with respect to the designation of the United Nations-wide senior focal point to prevent, protect against and promote accountability for reprisals and intimidation. It is the view of the Group that such a matter needs further reflection and deliberation by the general and universal membership of the General Assembly prior to a determination being made. Equally, the Group believes that a feasibility study should, as a matter of necessity, be undertaken to take stock of the different

mechanisms currently being utilized in other United Nations bodies prior to such a determination being made by the Human Rights Council. The Group wishes to reiterate its position on rejecting any form of reprisals on individuals or groups.

In conclusion, the African Group wishes to reassure the President of the Council of our support in the preparations for the eighth cycle year of the Human Rights Council.

**The President:** I now give the floor to the observer of the European Union.

**Ms. Kaljulate** (European Union): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union (EU). The candidate countries the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro, Iceland and Serbia; the countries of the Stabilization and Association Process and potential candidates Albania and Bosnia and Herzegovina; as well as the Republic of Moldova, align themselves with this statement.

The European Union would like to thank the President of the Human Rights Council, Ambassador Henczel, for introducing the Council's eighth annual report (A/68/53) to the General Assembly. We also appreciated the opportunity to hold an interactive dialogue with the Human Rights Council President at the Third Committee.

Since the establishment of the Human Rights Council, the European Union has been a strong supporter of the main United Nations human rights body. The Council has strengthened the ability of the United Nations to ensure that all persons enjoy their human rights. We attach great importance to the credibility and effectiveness of the Council and will continue to make every effort to ensure that it is able to address situations of violations of human rights, including gross and systematic violations, and respond promptly to human rights emergencies, but also to improve human rights standards worldwide through systematic work on various thematic issues.

In view of that, the European Union is very pleased to note that the Council has maintained its leadership in addressing human rights situations. In particular, the Council's response to the crisis in the Syrian Arab Republic is highly important, including the holding of an urgent debate and extending the mandate of the Commission of Inquiry, which is the only international investigative mechanism on human rights violations

in the country. The Council has also demonstrated its commitment to providing technical assistance and capacity-building to the Governments of Afghanistan, Cambodia, the Central African Republic, Côte d'Ivoire, the Democratic Republic of Congo, the Republic of Guinea, Haiti, Mali, Somalia, South Sudan, the Sudan and Yemen to promote human rights. The EU hopes that the Council will continue to follow situations where technical assistance and capacity-building can make a difference, and take action where necessary.

On Tuesday, the General Assembly elected 14 new members of the Council (see A/68/PV.51). Serving as a member entails important responsibilities. Resolution 60/251 provides that members elected to the Council shall uphold the highest standards in the promotion and protection of human rights. We encourage all to pay full attention to the human rights records and human rights commitments of States throughout their membership, as well as at the time of the elections.

The EU highly values the work of special procedures and is firmly convinced that they play a crucial role in advancing the human rights agenda. As we celebrate the twentieth anniversary of the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action, which has anchored the system of special procedures in the international human rights protection system, we still need to significantly improve the overall cooperation among States and mandate holders. All EU member States have extended a standing invitation to the special procedures, and the EU calls upon all United Nations Members to do likewise and to actively cooperate with them. In order to allow special procedures to perform their role, it is crucial that mandate holders be able to independently assess and draw the Council's attention to human rights issues and situations. The EU welcomes the use of the collective voice of the special procedures and the growing participation of mandate holders in the Council.

Given the situation in the countries, the EU welcomes the extension of the mandates on Belarus, Eritrea, Myanmar/Burma and Iran. We welcome the extension of the mandate of the Special Rapporteur and the establishment of a commission of inquiry on the situation of human rights in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, as well as the mandate renewals of the Special Rapporteur on Eritrea and the Independent Experts on the situation of human rights in Côte d'Ivoire, the Sudan, Somalia and Haiti, and the creation

of new Independent Expert mandates on the Central African Republic and Mali.

Thematic special procedures play an equally important role through their research, country-specific visits and valuable contribution to the better understanding of the content of specific human rights and their contribution to the enhancement and realization of human rights standards. Among the many thematic special procedures, the EU would like to highlight the mandate of the Special Rapporteur on the freedom of religion or belief, who plays an active role in identifying existing and emerging obstacles to the enjoyment of the right to freedom of religion or belief and presenting recommendations to overcome such obstacles.

The European Union remains strongly committed to the universal periodic review (UPR), a truly universal and unique mechanism within the United Nations that addresses all human rights and applies to all Member States without distinction or discrimination. That mechanism serves as an ongoing contribution to the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms on the ground. Preserving the universality of the universal periodic review process is of paramount importance, and in that regard the Council has been successful.

Ultimately, the quality of the review recommendations and the commitment to implement them are key for the outcome of that process. In accordance with existing rules and practice, all recommendations made during the interactive dialogue need to be included and noted as such in the report of the Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review. Equal treatment of all countries is an underlying element of the UPR mechanism, and needs to be maintained throughout each cycle. In that regard, we welcome the President's letter clarifying certain procedural aspects of the UPR process.

The EU wishes in particular to highlight and welcome several important developments during the reporting period.

First, the enjoyment of human rights by women and girls figured as a major theme of the Human Rights Council agenda during the period under review. The Council decided to hold a panel discussion on the prevention and elimination of child, early and forced marriage, placing that issue on the Council agenda for

the first time. The Council also decided to hold a panel discussion on female genital mutilation.

Secondly, the Council addressed the issue of the death penalty through two new initiatives.

Thirdly, the Council continued its crucial work on the rights of the child, with a full-day annual panel discussion and a resolution, presented jointly by the European Union and the Latin American and Caribbean Group, dedicated to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of health.

Fourthly, the Council also adopted its first resolution on creating and maintaining, in law and in practice, a safe and enabling environment for civil society, underlining the important role of civil society in the promotion and protection of human rights.

The EU reiterates its strongest condemnation of acts of reprisals and intimidation of civil society representatives attending the Human Rights Council and cooperating with human rights mechanisms and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. Contributions by civil society organizations and national human rights institutions are extremely valuable to the work of the Council. Their ability to interact with the Council must be preserved. We appreciate Mr. Henczel's vocal role as President and his efforts to preserve space for civil society. We are very pleased that the President's role has been formally acknowledged in that regard through the Council's resolution cooperation with the United Nations, its representatives and mechanisms in the field of human rights.

In conclusion, let me reiterate our unwavering commitment to contribute to the work of the Human Rights Council and to further strengthen its role in the development of international human rights law. We will continue to systematically uphold and ensure the implementation of existing international norms and standards, to strongly advocate for the universality of human rights and to promote the observance by all States of all human rights and fundamental freedoms.

**Mr. Rajeeve (India):** We thank the President of the Human Rights Council for his briefing on the activities of the Council.

Human rights questions are among the most important and cross-cutting of all subjects in the realm of international discussions today. The strength of the Human Rights Council lies in its emphasis on dialogue,

cooperation, transparency and non-selectivity in the promotion and protection of all human rights and fundamental freedoms for all. We believe that the Human Rights Council should emerge as a forum for voluntary participation and for sharing national experiences and best practices in the protection and promotion of human rights. There should be emphasis on capacity-building of States through technical and financial assistance.

It goes without saying that the actions of the United Nations and its organs should be anchored in the principles of the Charter of the United Nations. We believe that the collaboration of all States, in the spirit of equal and mutually respectful dialogue, is the most effective tool to promote and protect human rights. That will not only strengthen the confidence of all interested parties in the Human Rights Council and its mechanisms, but will also contribute to the reinforcement of the Council's political and moral authority and credibility.

We would like to express our appreciation to the High Commissioner for Human Rights, Ms. Navenetham Pillay, and her Office for supporting the work of the Human Rights Council. Serious thought needs to be given to increasing the accountability of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) to the Human Rights Council. We believe that our common endeavour to promote and protect all human rights for all globally can be advanced further through a formalized interaction that strengthens institutional linkages between the Council and OHCHR.

Regular interaction between OHCHR and the Human Rights Council in Geneva and the General Assembly in New York is important for deliberations on issues such as OHCHR's strategic thematic priorities, budgetary considerations, staffing, et cetera. It remains a matter of concern that OHCHR depends on voluntary funding for two-thirds of its budget. That financial dependence distorts strategic planning and the allocation of available resources in OHCHR's work. The geographical imbalance in the staffing pattern of the Office also continues to be a matter of concern. Those matters require greater attention and deliberation.

Special procedures are an important mechanism of the Human Rights Council for a genuine dialogue for strengthening the capacity of Member States. It is therefore important that Special Rapporteurs maintain

confidence by adhering to the code of conduct and their mandates established by the Council. We also reiterate the importance of ensuring the equitable distribution of financial resources among all special procedures mandate holders through a transparent process. In that regard, we would like to request the President of the Human Rights Council to reflect on those important issues and exchange views on the steps that can be taken by the Council.

I would also like to briefly refer to the issue of reprisals. We share the view that any act of reprisal or intimidation is unacceptable and must be dealt with effectively. However, we regret that the Human Rights Council was unable to address that issue in a unified manner. We are in fact concerned by attempts in the Council to trespass into areas that do not lie strictly within its mandate.

The appointment of a United Nations-wide mechanism on reprisals that will address other United Nations entities not primarily dealing with human rights issues is the prerogative of the body that has universal representation. We would have preferred that such matters be transmitted to the competent body — the General Assembly — of which the Human Rights Council is a subsidiary body. We would like to underline the importance of the Council's adherence to the institution-building package in carrying out its mandate.

Allow me also to place on record our appreciation to the President of the Human Rights Council, Mr. Remigiusz Henczel, for the smooth and effective manner in which he has conducted the deliberations of the Council. We also appreciate his efforts in streamlining the work of the Council through the annual voluntary calendar of Human Rights Council thematic resolutions.

We believe that the Human Rights Council should continue to rationalize and prioritize its work to make the most efficient use of limited resources. We reiterate our firm commitment to continuing to engage constructively with all Member States to make the Council more effective, efficient and responsive. We believe we can advance our common cause only through dialogue and cooperation.

**Mrs. Morgan** (Mexico) (*spoke in Spanish*): I would like to begin by thanking the President of the Human Rights Council, Ambassador Remigiusz Achilles

Henczel, for his introduction of the report on the Council (A/68/53).

Mexico is firmly committed to strengthening the international system of human rights and thereby consolidating the Human Rights Council. The Council is the premier multilateral body for promoting human rights, preventing new violations and developing ways of ensuring protection and non-recurrence. Faithful to that commitment, we were active participants in the establishment of the Council, and we maintain a permanent policy of cooperation with the specialized mechanisms of the United Nations and the Organization of American States, including an open invitation to visit our country. Since 2009, my country has had nine visits from the United Nations inter-American system mechanism and the High Commissioner for Human Rights. Thanks to the agreement and support of political stakeholders, civil society organizations and national and international human rights bodies with the ability to promote a joint agenda benefiting Mexicans, we have made progress in the area of human rights, putting us on the road to achieving a society of rights and a country of opportunity for all.

Aware that the recognition and protection of human rights should be guiding principles for State action, in 2011 we enacted human-rights reforms of our Constitution, representing the largest expansion of rights therein since its promulgation in 1917. The 2011 reform recognizes the importance of human rights under international treaties to which Mexico is a party, establishing the people-first principles of universality, progressivity, interdependence and indivisibility.

Less than a month ago, Mexico submitted its second report to the universal periodic review mechanism, focusing on the implementation and follow-up to the recommendations received in its first evaluation. In that exercise, the extent of the interventions was testament to the universality of this instrument, in which States participate on an equal footing, and demonstrated the mechanism's importance as one of the main tools by which the Human Rights Council can comprehensively address the human rights situation in every State. The report allowed us to identify areas where we have made progress in human rights but also where we have significant setbacks and challenges to overcome. We are aware that protecting human rights is a constant task and inherent part of building our democracy, and we therefore welcome this comprehensive and

participatory exercise, which reflects our country's plurality.

Mexico has been and will continue to be a responsible and active participant in building and operating the current international human rights framework. During our next term as a member of the Council, beginning on 1 January 2014, we will continue to promote respect for and promotion of the rights of migrants, people with disabilities and indigenous peoples. We will also submit initiatives, among others, aimed at countering and eliminating discrimination against women, protecting human rights in the fight against terrorism, and promoting the registration of births and the right to recognition as a person before the law.

It is also important to emphasize that we consider it fundamental that the Human Rights Council focus on preventing impunity by documenting situations of serious violations of human rights. In the context of cooperation that is typical of the Council, Mexico is working on actions on three fronts — reaffirming human rights as Government policy; helping the Council to deal effectively with its challenges, political as well as institutional and normative; and extending the support it makes available in sharing experiences and lessons learned with other Member States.

The report we are considering today reflects the large number of new initiatives addressing issues relevant to the promotion and protection of human rights in the context of the Council. We also welcome the strengthening of the Council's mandates over the past year. We know that the Council's relevance is dependent on its members, and we recognize that it is the responsibility of States to strengthen its effectiveness and the priority that the General Assembly and other organs of the system accord its recommendations. For that reason, we welcome the fact that an increasing number of States are recognizing the Council and its primary role in incorporating human rights into all United Nations activities.

**Mr. Cabactulan** (Philippines): We appreciate the opportunity to speak on this agenda item, which is of high priority to the Philippines as a founding and current member of the Human Rights Council. We would like to thank the President of the Council, Ambassador Remigiusz Achilles Henczel, for introducing its annual report to the General Assembly (A/68/53).

The Philippines supports the Human Rights Council in its efforts to strengthen the promotion and protection of human rights and attaches great importance to the maintenance of its credibility and effectiveness in addressing human rights violations. We congratulate the newly elected members of the Council and, as a current and founding member, look forward to continue working closely with all stakeholders to ensure that the Council fulfils its mandate, fosters healthy dialogue and cooperation and contributes to concrete and positive changes to the human rights situation on the ground.

Given the number of resolutions adopted by the Council this year, covering a broad array of issues, we stand committed more than ever to exerting greater efforts to ensure that the Council remains responsibly responsive in the face of current and emerging human rights challenges. As the Council, together with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, continues to develop international human rights standards and to work for greater consistency in normative frameworks, it is our position that the Council should remain focused on helping and encouraging all countries to build an environment enabling them to better promote the human rights of their peoples, in constructive cooperation with the international community and civil society. It should be a partner of all States and stakeholders in the promotion and protection of all human rights, with a strong focus on capacity-building and international cooperation, and it must continue to work in a constructive manner, engaging in meaningful interaction with them.

The Human Rights Council has made reasonable progress in fulfilling its mandate as set forth in resolution 60/251. We value the universal periodic review (UPR) as an effective mechanism of the Council, helping to ensure the principles of universality, objectivity and fairness, and to institutionalize cooperative and constructive dialogue on human rights in a less politicized and non-selective manner. The participation by all States in the first cycle reflects the universality and credibility of the UPR as an effective mechanism. It is our sincere hope that all Member States will continue to participate in the second cycle, to maintain the universality and credibility of the UPR as a mechanism of the Council. The UPR is a continuing process, and not merely a venue for scheduled reporting and review. The second cycle serves as an important follow-up to the recommendations that are made, and Member States have the primary responsibility for recognizing that.

The special procedures have an important role in promoting and protecting human rights. They bring alleged violations or abuses to world attention, raise public awareness, contribute to the development of international human rights standards and provide advice for technical cooperation. However, in the performance of those tasks, the special procedures must always be guided by the objectives of resolution 60/251, which recognizes that the promotion and protection of human rights should be based on the principles of cooperation and genuine dialogue and should be aimed at strengthening the capacity of Member States to comply with their human rights obligations, for the benefit of all human beings. While the independence of mandate holders is vital to their work, it must always be balanced with important considerations, such as professionalism, integrity, efficiency and effectiveness.

Discussions on the strengthening of the human rights treaty bodies will resume next month. We look forward to actively participating in the discussions and hope that we can, within a reasonable period, conclude with an outcome that is acceptable to all. There are several outstanding issues that need to be discussed further. Ultimately for us, however, strengthening the treaty body system means having a meaningful impact on both rights-holders and duty-bearers, with the end goal of promoting an enabling environment for the effective protection of the human rights of all persons, particularly those who are most vulnerable, such as women and children, persons with disabilities, migrant workers and persons vulnerable to racial discrimination, not just on the domestic level but on the international level as well.

Twenty years ago, the World Conference on Human Rights adopted by consensus the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action, which reaffirmed the right to development as a universal and inalienable right and an integral part of fundamental human rights. Three overarching themes were at the heart of the World Conference: the universality of human rights, the importance of democratic participation and the imperative of development. Sadly, the latter seems not to have been given the attention it deserves, even though it is rooted in the Charter of the United Nations and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. My delegation will therefore continue to advocate for, and support discussions on, the right to development, with a view to ensuring its realization, particularly in the Human Rights Council.

Also related to development, my country has now been subjected to massive devastation and destruction wrought not by a super storm but by a monster storm — the strongest storm in recorded history. Yet some scientists are still not in agreement that such natural phenomena are directly related to climate change. All we know is that we suffer the brunt, the wrath of nature, and what we have observed in more than five years are the increased frequency and ferocity of the storms and typhoons visiting our shores. In fact, we also observe that typhoons visiting the Philippines have in fact also taken new paths not taken by typhoons in the past. We hope that the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and the Warsaw Climate Change Conference, taking place this month, will be able to produce a real outcome that will make a dent on climate change, finally securing planet Earth.

Let me also take this opportunity to convey the genuine gratitude of my Government for the solidarity shown by the United Nations system and the international community and the unprecedented support given to my country now that it is suffering dire need and is in an extremely difficult situation. This has been unprecedented support by the international community given in the aftermath of the unprecedented storm that visited my country.

It may be recalled that in the Human Rights Council in 2011, the Philippines, together with Bangladesh, introduced a draft resolution on human rights and climate change that reiterated the concern that climate change posed an immediate and far-reaching threat to people and communities around the world and had implications on the full enjoyment of human rights. My country knows that at first hand. What is there to promote when even Government is not present during times of real massive destruction?

In conclusion, we remain steadfast in our commitment to providing a meaningful contribution to the work of the Council and to the promotion and protection of all human rights and fundamental freedoms.

**Mr. AlSaleh (Kuwait)** (*spoke in Arabic*): Today we are discussing one of the most important items inscribed on the agenda, namely, the work of the Human Rights Council. I would like to thank the Human Rights Council for the efforts it has made, as set out in its report (A/68/53), as well as its coverage of topics relating to human rights, including, most significantly, the right to

freedom of expression and issues pertaining to women, children and education, among others. The report also covers other important aspects of human rights, such as matters concerning non-discrimination, the rejection of violence and the prevention of genocide, that reflect the important role undertaken by the Council to defend and promote human rights.

The State of Kuwait contributes effectively to promoting human rights at the international level through its support to States and international organizations, politically and materially, as reflected in its efforts since it joined the Human Rights Council in mid-2011.

A look into the situation of human rights in Kuwait reveals that they are, to a great extent, a reality. That is due to the fact that instituting them was not a spur-of-the-moment reaction or a new concern in the State of Kuwait. Rather, since our country's inception, human rights have been rooted in our universal Islamic and Arab heritage. They constitute a principle that we have adopted, and we do not deviate from them because we believe in respect for lofty human rights and values.

When Kuwait drafted its Constitution in 1962, it took into consideration human rights in general, and it placed international instruments and declarations among the most important reference points. Human dignity in the State of Kuwait is protected. Many provisions stipulate that, including articles 29 and 31 of our first Constitution, which emphasize equality and human dignity and the impermissibility of imprisoning persons except by law. The Constitution took into consideration the rights of workers residing on our territory. Article 40 of the Constitution provides that the right to education is enshrined in our law; we provide free compulsory education at all educational stages.

The State of Kuwait emphasizes its commitment to the standards of human rights, and the Kuwaiti Constitution issued in 1962 conforms to those criteria. Article 35 stipulates that the freedom of belief is absolute, and the State protects religious rights and rituals. With regard to the freedom of opinion and expression, article 36 of our Constitution stipulates that the freedoms of opinion and of scientific research are guaranteed. Every person has the right to express his opinion verbally and in writing under the law: our Constitution underscores the freedom to write, print and publish. Article 37 stipulates that freedom of the press and printing is guaranteed by law.

In the context of our efforts to promote the role and rights of persons with disabilities in society, the State of Kuwait acceded to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities on 22 August, in implementation of our commitment to the Human Rights Council during our submission under the universal periodic review.

The State of Kuwait provides many forms of humanitarian assistance through international and non-governmental organizations, such as the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, as it believes in the need to promote international peace and security and human rights. As a result, the State of Kuwait hosted the first international donors conference for Syria last January, at which more than \$1.5 billion was pledged in support of humanitarian activities in that country. We also welcome the call of Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon to host a second donors conference next year in Kuwait in order to alleviate the suffering of the brotherly people of Syria.

We underscore our support for the draft resolution before the Third Committee on the situation of human rights in the Syrian Arab Republic (A/C.3/68/L.42), which strongly condemns the continued widespread and systematic gross violations of human rights and violations of international humanitarian law through the continued use of heavy weapons and aerial bombardments by the Syrian authorities in populated areas. We also condemn all such violations by the armed opposition forces.

We also condemn Israel's illegal settlement activities and practices in the occupied Palestinian territories and its continued human rights violations against the Palestinian people through restrictions on their freedom of movement, the confiscation of land, the destruction of their homes and the imprisonment of thousands of Palestinians in conditions that breach basic human rights law. Israel also imposes an unjust blockade on Gaza in breach of human rights and the relevant Security Council and General Assembly resolutions and the Fourth Geneva Convention of 1949. The international community should therefore shoulder its responsibilities and compel Israel to fulfil its obligations under international law.

In conclusion, we would like to underscore our respect for international human rights agreements and instruments. We support all efforts to promote and uphold such instruments. We believe in strengthening our cooperation in that regard in order to achieve our

joint aspirations for the advancement and prosperity of our nations and peoples.

**Mr. Barriga** (Liechtenstein): Liechtenstein welcomes President Henczel to the General Assembly and thanks him for his introducing the Human Rights Council's report (A/68/53). His engagement in promoting and improving the work of the Council is exemplary and part of a tradition of strong leadership in that body. The challenges that the Council has faced this year have been particularly serious due to their potential to affect its future course. Liechtenstein is grateful to the President for his personal and successful commitment to preserving the integrity of the Council and its mechanisms, in particular the universality of the universal periodic review (UPR), which is the basis for constructive cooperation among Member States in the framework of the UPR.

Liechtenstein sees in the participation in the UPR a first and necessary step towards the more substantive cooperation that every Member State should make on the basis of its sovereign equality — a principle that is enshrined in the Charter and that is not negotiable. But, even with its universality preserved, the UPR has suffered from attempts at its politicization. Liechtenstein calls on all States to refrain from interfering in the carefully designed proceedings of the UPR in order to ensure its continued functioning.

With its second cycle well under way, the UPR continues to bring key value added to the Council, in particular as compared to its predecessor body. It has developed into a cornerstone of the United Nations human rights machinery. The UPR has also generated considerable momentum among States to examine and to improve their domestic human rights situations. It promotes ratification of the core human rights instruments, and thus contributes to the long-term goal of achieving universality.

At the same time, the second UPR cycle has shone a spotlight on the discrepancies between political commitment and implementation. That is where our emphasis should lie in future. States should increasingly aim their recommendations at the implementation of international standards by focusing on concrete and actionable steps to assist them in that regard. In parallel, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights should be given the financial resources necessary to assist States in following up on their commitments.

By undergoing the second cycle of the UPR in January and June, Liechtenstein has again benefited from a wealth of recommendations, the large majority of which it has accepted. Once implemented, we trust that those recommendations will considerably strengthen the protection of human rights in Liechtenstein, as is the case with other States that perceive the UPR as an opportunity to promote improvements.

*Mr. Errázuriz (Chile), Vice-President, took the Chair.*

The Human Rights Council increasingly lives up to its responsibility to address human rights emergencies with the tools at its disposal. Liechtenstein welcomes the repeated action of the Council to address the human rights emergency in Syria. At the same time, it is sobering that the aspect of ending impunity has not been accorded the priority that it deserves. Accountability is key to ending the cycles of violence that have caused so many civilian deaths in Syria. The Council and its mechanisms must therefore take a clear stance on ensuring that justice is served for the victims in Syria.

The Commission of Inquiry on Syria continues to do valuable work in gathering evidence of mass atrocities. It is hardly comprehensible, however, that the Commission does not express itself more clearly on concrete options to ensure accountability. In our view, that can be detrimental to the fulfilment of its mandate to establish the facts of alleged mass atrocities and to identify those responsible with a view to holding them accountable. In addition, a clear position by the Commission on judicial follow-up could help shape the current discussions on that subject.

Liechtenstein continues to consider the International Criminal Court as the appropriate institution to deal with the situation in Syria in the light of its gravity. We repeat our call on the Security Council to take action accordingly.

The Human Rights Council has again contributed substantially to both long-standing and emerging human rights discussions. Liechtenstein welcomes the Council's more active role in the global discussion on the death penalty and its implications. We look forward to a more in-depth and systematic look at that issue under the framework of the Council. We believe that the Council can make an important contribution to a better informed and less confrontational discussion aimed at concrete steps towards improved procedures,

strengthened safeguards and the gradual elimination of that practice.

Liechtenstein also welcomes the decision of the Council to act more decisively in order to address reprisals against persons who cooperate with its mechanisms and the Secretariat. The establishment of a high-level focal point will, we hope, contribute to the better protection of human rights defenders and victims of human rights violations who have made the brave decision to contribute to the work of the United Nations. Reprisals are among the most destructive ways in which States violate their obligation to cooperate with human rights procedures. The United Nations therefore has a particular responsibility to protect those who contribute to its work and should step up its efforts substantially in that regard.

Finally, Liechtenstein expresses its ongoing support for the Council as a forum in which emerging human rights problems find a place for discussion. Together with a number of other States, Liechtenstein has been pleased to initiate a broader dialogue on the human rights implications of current surveillance practices, with a view to bringing them in line with internationally agreed standards, such as the right to privacy, as set out in the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. We look forward to following up on those discussions in the framework of the Council and in the General Assembly.

**Mr. Umemoto** (Japan): I would like to express my gratitude to Mr. Remigiusz Henczel, President of the Human Rights Council, for introducing the Council's report (A/68/53) today. Since its establishment, the Human Rights Council has played an important role in promoting universal respect for the protection of all human rights and fundamental freedoms for all. The Council has also steadily and steadfastly accumulated achievements as it responds actively to human rights violations and makes recommendations thereon. For its part, the Government of Japan has made great efforts to strengthen the work and functioning of the Council.

We welcome and support the transparent and strenuous activities of the various commissions of inquiry established by the Human Rights Council. We earnestly hope that those activities, despite various constraints, will lead to the amelioration of global human rights situations by the international community. In that connection, we appreciate the progress that has been made, particularly in countries that have the will to improve their human rights situation with

the assistance of country-specific resolutions from the Human Rights Council. Examples include the Central African Republic, Somalia, Côte d'Ivoire and South Sudan. We are also pleased that the resolution entitled "Advisory services and technical assistance for Cambodia", submitted by Japan in cooperation with Cambodia, was adopted by consensus. We support the Council in its efforts to continue to provide capacity-building through such resolutions.

The universal periodic review (UPR) is a truly innovative mechanism within the Council, through which we can effectively improve the human rights situation in all Member States through the voluntary follow-up actions associated with the review. Japan will actively engage in the efforts to make the UPR, including the follow-up, more effective. On the other hand, the UPR alone is insufficient to address the serious human rights violations that occur around the world. In that regard, the special procedures complement the UPR and are indispensable mechanisms. If the special procedures are to achieve their mandate, their independence and unfettered access to the countries concerned are essential. We therefore call on all parties to fully cooperate with the special procedures. For its part, Japan has issued a standing invitation to the special procedures mechanisms and will, as always, fully cooperate with them.

In the field of human rights, it is essential to work with civil society. Progress in that regard was made with the Council's adoption by consensus of a draft resolution on civil society space, submitted by Japan, Ireland, Tunisia, Chile and Sierra Leone this past September. Member States need to ensure a safe and enabling environment where individuals from civil society are able to enjoy universally recognized human rights and fundamental freedoms.

The resources of the Council, including its budget, are stretched thin, owing to the increased number of resolutions and special procedures. On the one hand, we must ensure that the Council has a budget for the necessary mandates; on the other, we should consider how the work of the Council can move forward bearing in mind the need to prevent the duplication of mandates and enhance its overall effectiveness and efficiency.

To conclude, I would like to reiterate that Japan will continue to conduct its diplomacy guided by universal values such as human rights and democracy. Japan will also continue to fulfil its responsibility as a member of the Human Rights Council.

**Mr. Reyes Rodríguez (Cuba)** (*spoke in Spanish*): We welcome our colleague and friend Remigiusz Henczel, President of the Human Rights Council, and applaud his outstanding professionalism, permanent commitment and leadership in carrying out the work of the Council. We also welcome our friend Eric Tistounet, who gave immeasurable service to ensure the efficient work of the Council and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights.

The Human Rights Council was born from the need to address the problems of double standards, confrontation and the political manipulation of its predecessor body, the Human Rights Commission. We must prevent the repetition of such negative practices, which thoroughly discredited the old Commission. Cuba has been very clear in its rejection of the imposition of such practices.

Nonetheless, we are concerned by the tendency of certain members to impose their own selectivity and double standards on the Council when it comes to questions of human rights, as can be clearly seen in many of the initiatives adopted by the Council during the period covered by the current report (A/68/53). Cooperation and dialogue should guide the work of that body.

Given that reality, the universal periodic review has become the only universal mechanism free of double standards for the comprehensive analysis of human rights in all countries. It constitutes the major achievement of the Council in comparison with the old Human Rights Commission. The mechanism has proven itself as a means for international cooperation on human rights based on constructive dialogue and respect for the principles of universality, objectivity, impartiality and non-selectivity.

For Cuba, as long as an unjust and exclusionary international economic and political order persists, the Council must continue to advocate on behalf of a democratic and equitable international order. As long as egotism and glaring inequality prevail in the world, we will have to continue to strive for international solidarity. As long as unilateral coercive measures and the kind of ironclad blockades under which Cuba has suffered for more than 50 years continue to be imposed, the Council must reject such practices and demand their end. And as long as hunger and malnutrition continue to steal the happiness and compromise the future of millions of people, the Council will have to continue fighting for the right to food.

The special procedures in the Council should be guided by respect for the principles of objectivity and impartiality, and in general should respect the code of conduct adopted during the process of the Council's formation as an institution. We should repeat that the holders of the special procedures mandates owe those mandates to the body that created them, and must report to it. They are not press agents and should not be engaged in media activity or in mobilizing opinion, which lies outside the purview of their mandate. They have an important role to play in keeping the intergovernmental body informed. They should conduct their work with a view to enhancing international cooperation on the topics that form part of the Council's priorities and on those topics with regard to which the resolutions that created those special procedures were adopted.

The same should apply to the human rights treaty bodies, where, fortunately, more solid work has been done. In them we have a mechanism and a focus on cooperation that we should preserve and always bear in mind, in order to ensure that we avoid irresponsible decisions that could undermine the climate of cooperation that should prevail in the treaty bodies when we are dealing with the current process of reform of those entities.

The Council should ensure that the reaffirmation of the right to international solidarity becomes an urgent goal and not a chimera, as it is today, with the aim of tackling the serious challenges posed by the deep economic, financial, energy, environmental and food crisis affecting the world.

Cuba, which was a founding member of the Human Rights Council and has just been re-elected to a term beginning in January 2014, assumes its responsibilities by reaffirming its unswerving commitment to the promotion of and respect for human rights. We are grateful to all for the trust thus conferred on our country. We will continue to promote the rights of peoples to self-determination, peace and development and the right to food, and to seek to achieve the establishment of a democratic and equitable international order, fighting against racism, xenophobia and all forms of discrimination, as well as for cultural rights and respect for diversity. In short, we seek to ensure that the common goal of a world that makes all human rights available to all is no longer a chimera.

**Mr. Zagaynov (Russian Federation)** (*spoke in Russian*): We would like to thank Mr. Remigiusz

Henczel, President of the Human Rights Council (HRC), for introducing the report of the Council (A/68/53).

The Russian Federation considers the Council to be a key component of the international human rights system that promotes the development of constructive international dialogue on matters with a human dimension. We are pleased to see that, after participating in the Council this year as an observer, the Russian Federation was re-elected by an overwhelming majority as a full member for the period 2014-2016. In many ways, that was a result of the fact that during the period preceding its membership in the Council, the Russian Federation established itself as a reliable and responsible partner in the area of human rights.

We intend to participate actively in the work of the Council in the future, cooperating constructively with all interested States. We will focus on the continued expansion of the range of international obligations in the area of human rights. We plan to continue our constructive cooperation with the HRC's special procedures and universal periodic review mechanism. As far as thematic priorities are concerned, we intend, as before, to have the Council focus increased attention on issues related to combating racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance, and on the prevention of human trafficking, the promotion of issues relating to business and human rights, traditional values and the integrity of the judicial system.

We have been compelled to conclude that the worrying trends that have become apparent in the work of the Council in recent years continue to gain momentum. Unfortunately, its work has often been characterized by the polarization of the interests of various groups of States. We still encounter attempts to divide States into the bad and the good, seriously hindering the objective and dispassionate discussion of issues on today's international human rights agenda.

We believe that such an approach is fundamentally antithetical to the Council's original purpose as a body established to launch and develop dialogue and cooperation. The Council should work to the benefit of all United Nations Member States, without exception, not serve one group's tactical interests. Ultimately, we must come to the realization that primary responsibility for promoting and protecting human rights rests with the States themselves, while the main task of the international community is to provide them with technical assistance on request.

In that regard, I would like once again to draw attention to such underlying principles of the Council as universality, impartiality, objectivity and non-selectivity, which are fully established in the framework of the universal periodic review procedure. As a member of the Council, the Russian Federation will continue to emphasize the significance of that unique mechanism of the Council. We firmly believe that the same principles must be observed within the framework of the Council's special procedures. In our view, it is essential that the special procedures must comply clearly and strictly with the United Nations code of conduct adopted by Member States.

The Russian Federation intends to cooperate constructively with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights on all issues on its agenda. In our view, the main focus of the Office's work should be on strengthening dialogue and cooperation with all States concerned, in order to provide them with the assistance required to ensure human rights and freedoms. Russia supports initiatives aimed at creating greater cooperation between the Human Rights Council and the Office of the High Commissioner, including on issues relating to planning, implementing and rationalizing Office programmes at the global, regional and country levels. We believe that the relationship between the Council and the Office of the High Commissioner should be transparent and allow for clear feedback.

**Ms. Najwa (Maldives):** At the outset, my delegation wishes to thank His Excellency Mr. Remigiusz Henczel, President of the Human Rights Council, for his presence here today and for his introduction of the report of the Council to the General Assembly (A/68/53). As we reflect on an eventful and challenging year for the Human Rights Council, I would like to express my delegation's sincere appreciation for the leadership taken by the Council on a number of issues of concern to the international community.

Let me also express our profound gratitude to the members of the Assembly for the wide support displayed yesterday when it re-elected the Maldives to the Council for another term, beginning in January 2014 (see A/68/PV.51). When the Maldives was elected to the Human Rights Council in 2010 as the smallest country to occupy a seat, we took on the challenges ahead with great enthusiasm and a strong sense of commitment. Since then, we have continued to advocate for the protection of basic human rights and fundamental

freedoms for all peoples in general, and specifically for the voiceless and marginalized.

Our membership in the Council for the past three years has been a catalyst for positive change domestically and has provided the right impetus for taking bold steps to protect and promote human rights in the country, including, inter alia, enacting important pieces of legislation, such as the Disabilities Act and the Domestic Violence Act, ratifying international human rights instruments such as all of the core conventions of the International Labour Organization and the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, and acceding to the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime. We firmly believe that our continued tenure on the Council will give us an opportunity to enhance and accelerate efforts to consolidate democracy and protect and promote human rights in our society.

However, while we are proud of the progress we have made, we recognize the challenges that lie ahead as we strive to achieve those objectives for the Maldivian people. First and foremost, we must further strengthen our human rights institutions and ensure that we have a functioning, responsible and independent judiciary that understands its role as a protector of the rule of law and human rights. We must endeavour to increase women's participation in both the public and the private sectors. We must ensure greater protection for our children and provide our youth with education and opportunities to contribute to the progress of society. But above all, we must try to build resilience and cultivate the value of the respect for human rights within our society in order to complement the formal and statutory measures already in place.

As described in the report of the Human Rights Council, the year 2013 has been an eventful one, with the escalation of violence and the deterioration in the human rights situations in various corners of the world. Whether those violations of human rights are a result of civil war in Syria, occupation in the Palestinian and Arab territories or ethnic and communal tensions elsewhere, we call on all parties involved to cease all ongoing violence and to engage in dialogue aimed at reaching a lasting peace. We also encourage countries undergoing transition to work towards substantive reforms, strengthen democratic institutions and ensure the protection of their people from all forms of abuse.

It is the work and the mandate of the Human Rights Council, and the United Nations as a whole, to assist

and facilitate positive outcomes in such situations. We are, therefore, encouraged by the ongoing efforts of the Council to provide technical assistance to countries in need, and we hope that it can built upon that assistance in the future. In that connection, we call upon all States in the process of transition and undergoing situations of unrest to work closely with international human rights bodies and with the international community, establish the necessary institutions, including independent judiciaries and credible human rights mechanisms, and ensure the creation of inclusive and democratic systems of governance. Inclusion and dialogue are the way forward.

Since undergoing our own transition to a democratic system of governance five years ago, the Maldives continues to be active in the area of human rights. We have used our own experience to firmly adhere to human rights principles, and based on those guiding principles, we have been able to participate actively at the international level, including through the various initiatives that the Maldives has led in the Human Rights Council. Based on our experience, we firmly believe in the need for more engagement with international bodies, including the Human Rights Council. We recognize the need for small States such as the Maldives to be heard in the large arenas.

In that regard, in 2012, with the support of a cross-regional group of partners, the Maldives took a lead role in establishing the Voluntary Fund for Financial and Technical Assistance aimed at supporting the participation of the least developed countries and the small island developing States at the Council. We are pleased to note that the Fund is finally in operation.

The universal periodic review (UPR) is a unique peer review mechanism that directly contributes to the efforts of States to promote and uphold their human rights obligations. It also provides an objective, transparent and constructive cooperative framework for States to exchange views and interact on human rights issues.

We fully support and reaffirm the Human Rights Council resolution that established the universal periodic review mechanism. While adequate steps must be taken to encourage States to participate, the Maldives believes that there must be appropriate measures to enable the Council to move forward with the review, even if States decide not to cooperate. The Maldives also believes that engagement in the UPR process provides countries with an opportunity to improve their

human rights situations. But we should also ensure that technical and other advisory assistance is provided to countries to implement recommendations.

Today, as the Maldives celebrates its election to the Human Rights Council for a second term, we pledge our continued support to the cause of promoting and protecting human rights, and we wish to assure the international community that we will continue our work domestically and internationally with the same enthusiasm and sense of commitment that we embraced when we were first elected. In the Council the Maldives will continue to forge strong partnerships with all relevant international stakeholders with a view to attaining an effective and results-oriented global human rights protection system in line with the five key principles that we wholeheartedly believe in, namely, first, that human rights are inviolable and universal and that the promotion and protection of human rights across the globe must be done in a non-selective, equitable and non-politicized manner; secondly, that human rights remain central at the domestic and international levels; thirdly, that dialogue and partnership between countries and other actors is of utmost importance; fourthly, that human rights must be realized for all peoples, regardless of nationality, religion or ethnicity; and finally, that an objective assessment to improve human rights standards around the world in a balanced, fair and independent manner must be pursued.

In the days ahead, the Maldives would like to see an end to violence and a stronger focus on human rights in countries where violence and unrest prevails. We would like to see emerging democracies build human rights resilience and work towards creating a culture of respect for human rights. We would like to see the global community put more emphasis on and effort into protecting and respecting our natural environment, achieving greater equality for women and strengthening the protection of the rights of children and the disabled. The Maldives calls upon all States to fully engage and cooperate with the United Nations and human rights mechanisms. We stand ready to lend our assistance and extend our continued commitment to improving human rights protection, both at home and abroad. We look forward to continuing our positive activism in the Human Rights Council, through which we hope to contribute to creating a world that gives greater recognition to and respect for human rights.

**Mr. Seger** (Switzerland) (*spoke in French*): Switzerland thanks the President of the Human Rights

Council for introducing the Council's report (A/68/53) and, more generally, for the efficient and positive manner in which he is fulfilling his mandate. We welcome the higher profile that human rights in general and the Human Rights Council in particular have assumed within the United Nations system.

Switzerland has supported the Human Rights Council from its very beginning. Similarly, five years later, it supported the establishment of the review process. It is extremely important to ensure that that mechanism is able to continue to fulfil the objectives for which the international community created it, namely, to strengthen, promote and protect the human rights of all and to address specific situations of human rights violations. Most of the recent crises were first taken up by the Human Rights Council, before being considered by the Security Council. We can therefore say that the Human Rights Council is more relevant and central than ever to making the world a more peaceful place.

Switzerland also notes with satisfaction that the universal periodic review (UPR) process has taken deep root in the Human Rights Council. That mechanism is unique in its form as a peer review that ensures equal treatment of all countries when it comes to assessing their practices in the field of human rights. At the same time, it provides the international community with a regular review of the human rights records of all Member States of the United Nations. We can say that up to now the cooperation between States and the Human Rights Council in the universal period review process has generally worked well, with every State taking its responsibilities seriously and ensuring its full participation in the review.

However, if we want the UPR process to become a more effective and credible human rights mechanism in the long term, it must become deeply rooted at the national level. We therefore call on States to ensure the implementation of the recommendations made in the course of their reviews through a transparent, comprehensive and participatory implementation process and by informing the international community about the steps they have taken in that regard. Switzerland is convinced that only the commitment of all States Members of the United Nations can ensure the effectiveness of this promising process.

Switzerland welcomes the increased engagement of States and civil society within the Human Rights Council and their readiness to launch new initiatives

and to establish new mechanisms. One of the direct outcomes of that engagement, as stated in the report, was the Human Rights Council's adoption of more than 100 resolutions in 2013, twice as many as six years ago.

We all know that a resolution can have a real impact only if it is properly implemented. That is why Switzerland believes it is now time for the Council to start focusing more on implementation processes, since one of the reasons for the creation of the Human Rights Council was to address the gap in implementing human rights on a global scale.

Many of the resolutions make it necessary to convene new meetings and committees of experts to establish new mandates. At the same time, the resources that the Secretary-General requested the Fifth Committee to provide for the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) to maintain the Council's secretariat fall far short of the needs, which continue to grow. That disparity between demands and available resources has already resulted in a cutback in existing OHCHR field operations, the shelving of new ones and the abandonment of regional and international projects.

In that context, we regret that OHCHR's proposal for the 2014-2015 budget, which will be discussed at the Fifth Committee in the coming days, does not reflect that pressing need for additional resources and, instead, proposes cuts. We consider that this situation considerably weakens the desire to make human rights a reality for all. We believe that without additional resources, the legacy of the major projects that have been undertaken and the commitments we have seen in the implementation of human rights may be undermined in the long term.

Therefore, Switzerland urges States to mobilize within the Fifth Committee in order to significantly strengthen financing from the regular budget for the activities of the Council. The shortfall in this area is significant, even though human rights are one of the three pillars of the work of the United Nations. However, less than 3 per cent of the Organization's regular budget is allocated to human rights.

The Human Rights Council, along with the monitoring and implementation bodies, including the OHCHR, contribute to making Geneva the world's capital for the protection of human rights. The Council's President can count on the full commitment and support of Switzerland. My country will continue to strengthen

the institutions located in Geneva and expresses its full cooperation with the Human Rights Council.

**Sheikha Al-Thani** (Qatar) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I would like to express our appreciation to Mr. Henczel, President of the Human Rights Council, for introducing the Council's comprehensive report (A/68/53) this morning. We also congratulate the countries elected yesterday as members of the Council.

The Human Rights Council plays an important, pivotal role in the promotion and protection of all human rights and all fundamental freedoms without discrimination and in a fair and equitable manner. Given the tragic changes and political and intellectual transformation in the world today, which have deepened divisions as a result of tensions and instability and the deterioration of human rights situations in many countries, we need, more than ever before, to stress the importance of impartiality, objectivity and non-selectivity in the work of the Human Rights Council.

Undoubtedly, more than seven years since its establishment, the Council continues to work effectively and to play a crucial role in addressing human rights violations. Its role as a major pillar in international mechanisms to promote human rights has increased. As we start the second round of the universal periodic review, it is important to provide funding for the Councils' activities so that it can avoid the shortcomings of the previous session.

Qatar, thanks to its wise leadership, has attached primary importance to the promotion and protection of human rights in line with our Strategic Vision 2030, which includes the promotion of a safe and stable society based on the principles of equality, justice and the rule of law and promoting human rights at the regional and international levels.

Once again, we would like to stress that ever since we became a member of the Council in 2008, we have honoured our commitments in the field of universal values and human rights. We have fully cooperated with the Council in order to enhance and strengthen the promotion of human rights. We have adopted a policy that focuses on the promotion and protection of human rights. We have also hosted a centre of documentation on human rights for the Arab and Western Asia region, which has improved our performance at the national, regional and international levels by helping us develop the institutional and legal framework to protect human

rights. We have adopted a comprehensive approach to dealing with human rights at the national level, in terms of education, health and gender equality, as well as the protection of migrant workers.

There are many items on the agenda of the Human Rights Council, especially concerning the Arab world. Unfortunately, the human rights situation in our region, especially in the Palestinian territories, has not witnessed any improvement. Despite repeated calls for the Israeli authorities to promote the human rights and fundamental freedoms of the Palestinian people, its officials continue to allow illegal practices that violate international humanitarian law and international law. Those include the oppressive detention and imprisonment of Palestinians, including children, and the demolition of homes. We are concerned about the suffocation of the Palestinian economy and the fact that Palestinians are being deprived of water, in blatant violation of international law, especially the relevant Security Council resolutions. The deteriorating humanitarian situation in Gaza and Israeli coercive measures and practices increase the hardship and suffering of Palestinian refugees. That should serve to remind the international community of the importance of our full support to the Palestinian people and the call for righting the historic injustice to which they have been subjected.

We call on the Council to respond to the alarming situation in the Syrian Arab Republic, especially the repeated violations of human rights, war crimes and crimes against humanity. The report of the Council-mandated Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic — which was not allowed to enter the country to discharge its mandat — highlighted the increasing human rights violations in Syria. Such practices have made Syria a battleground of destruction and violence. That is why the international community should take all measures necessary in order to protect the human rights of the Syrian people.

We also emphasize that we will continue to cooperate with the mechanisms of the Council. We hope the Council will achieve even more in the coming year.

**Mr. Ulibarri** (Costa Rica) (*spoke in Spanish*): We would like to thank the President of the Human Rights Council for his presentation. We welcome the reports on the essential work performed by the Council in different subject areas and in all parts of the world

(A/68/53). Costa Rica reiterates its full commitment to, and support for, the work of the Human Rights Council as the central body of the United Nations on that matter. The plenary of the General Assembly must consider the entirety of its report, which reveals that despite the many challenges encountered, the Council has been able to live up to its mandate appropriately.

Particular reference should be made to the work and good offices of the President to preserve the universality of the universal periodic review (UPR). We urge all States to continue to participate in the second UPR cycle with the same enthusiasm that was apparent during the first cycle, and to commit at the highest level to implement its recommendations. It is also essential to formulate increasingly precise and concrete recommendations, and seek cooperation mechanisms to build the necessary national capacities for implementation.

As a responsible member of the Council, Costa Rica has remained active and committed to its work, building purposeful alliances with countries in different regions, promoting major initiatives and encouraging dialogue in negotiations. Over the past year, we have championed major resolutions in the Council, on which we reached consensus, such as those relating to the promotion and protection of human rights in the context of peaceful demonstrations, on which we worked together with Switzerland and Turkey, and on conscientious objection to military service, where we were a major sponsor with Croatia and Poland. The latter was the first resolution of a substantive nature to be adopted by the Council on that subject.

Costa Rica also continues its traditional collective work in human rights education and training, with the resolution on the World Programme on the subject, whose third phase will focus on journalists and other media workers. In that connection, we had the honour to work with Italy, Morocco, Slovenia, Senegal, Switzerland and the Philippines, as well as the nearly 80 other sponsors of the resolution.

In addition, along with Ecuador and Peru, we worked on a robust but inclusive draft resolution on the impact of arms transfers on human rights in armed conflict. We also promoted a round table on capital punishment, together with Benin, France, Mongolia and the Republic of Moldova. We continue to promote the development of the themes of human rights and the environment, working with countries such as Maldives and Switzerland.

We believe that the Human Rights Council is the appropriate forum for undertaking high-quality discussions on issues over which we might have diverging views, but where we can find points of agreement to bolster the promotion and protection of human rights.

For Costa Rica it is very important to guarantee coherence between our foreign policy on human rights and our domestic policy on the subject. For that reason, we continue our efforts to improve the human rights situation of all our inhabitants, while maintaining the high standards that we are known for historically. We invest greatly in social development. Our office of the people's advocate, a national independent human rights body, has a constitutional jurisdiction for providing effective remedies and simple and direct access, such as recourse to refuge, to protect all human rights. Among our most recent achievements on this front, we would list the following.

First, we have implemented a comprehensive national programme on emotional health and sexuality. Secondly, there is new legislation against trafficking in persons, which provides new tools for action by the authorities and establishes major penalties against labour exploitation, sex tourism and trafficking in organs, tissues and body fluids. Thirdly, we have established a round table for dialogue among representatives of indigenous peoples and senior Government representatives. Fourthly, a decree has been issued that recognizes seven native languages of the indigenous peoples of Costa Rica and establishes the right of indigenous students to have the local culture and their worldview incorporated into educational curriculums. Lastly, our parliament has approved the Third Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, regarding a communications procedure.

Our country's work is guided by principles and seeks to promote and protect all human rights, whether civil, cultural, economic, political or social, in all circumstances and in every place. We encourage dialogue and cross-regional alliances, and we build bridges to contribute to the effective implementation of Council decisions and resolutions.

As Chair of the Council's Working Group on the Right to Peace, we have made progress on a strategy that is transparent, inclusive, consensual and objective that seeks consensus on this important and still controversial subject. We maintain an open invitation to all United Nations special procedures. In that regard,

we were pleased to receive the visit, in the middle of this year, of Mr. John Knox, Independent Expert on the issue of human rights obligations relating to the enjoyment of a safe, clean, healthy and sustainable environment. We look forward to his report.

We will continue to carry out the functions entrusted to us by the members of the Council, guided by universality, impartiality, objectivity, non-selectivity and non-politicization, in constructive international dialogue in a spirit cooperation.

In the light of the foregoing, we respectfully ask for support for our desire to be re-elected for the period 2014-2017.

**Mr. Och** (Mongolia): Let me first that this opportunity to thank Ambassador Henczel, President of the Human Rights Council, for introducing the annual report of the Council (A/68/53).

The importance of the matters before the Council for decision stimulates all Member States to try to develop greater international cooperation in the promotion of human rights and fundamental freedoms across the world. The promotion and protection of human rights is one of the main pillars of the foreign policy of Mongolia. Mongolia's principled position was affirmed by the Minister for Foreign Affairs in his address to the high-level segment of the twenty-second session of the Human Rights Council.

The Government of Mongolia is undertaking legal reforms to harmonize its national laws with international norms and standards. That inclusive process, with the active participation of civil society, includes the establishment of adequate national mechanisms, the adoption of relevant national programmes and the improvement of institutional capacity.

As a country that adopted a nationally specific ninth Millennium Development Goal, on strengthening human rights and fostering democratic governance, Mongolia recognizes the centrality of human rights in development planning and acknowledges that human rights, the rule of law and democracy are interlinked and mutually reinforcing. We are thankful to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights for the support that it has extended to Mongolia during its presidency of the Community of Democracies from 2011 to 2013. We welcomed the message from Ms. Navanethem Pillay and the participation by the Special Rapporteur on freedom of peaceful assembly and association in the seventh Ministerial Conference

of the Community of Democracies. My delegation also expresses its appreciation to fellow Member States for their support of resolution 67/18, on education for democracy, which was presented by Mongolia.

Mongolia has submitted its candidature to the Human Rights Council for the term of 2016-2018 for the first time. Mongolia is guided by the aspiration to make a meaningful contribution to the promotion of human rights and freedoms at the regional and international levels. We are willing to share our experience with others. By ratifying and implementing over 30 human rights instruments, including seven core conventions, Mongolia demonstrated its strong commitment to the strengthening of the international human rights system. Last year Mongolia ratified the Second Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, which seeks the abolition of the death penalty.

Accordingly, our domestic legislation will be amended to permanently eliminate capital punishment. Mongolia became a sponsor of resolution 62/149, entitled "Moratorium on the use of the death penalty", and joined the initiative launched in the Human Rights Council to organize the high-level panel discussion on the question of the death penalty during the twenty-fifth session of the Council. Mongolia signed the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearances and recently signed the Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture and the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on a communications procedure.

Our Government consistently supports the work of special mandate holders, welcomes the expansion of the mandates and is ready to cooperate and assist Special Rapporteurs by ensuring the completion of their independent mandates and providing them with follow-up information. The latest visit of the Special Rapporteur on extreme poverty and human rights was extremely important and useful, and we expect a visit by the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders.

Mongolia recognizes the unique role played by the universal periodic review (UPR) mechanism in providing the means to submit a comprehensive report on the human rights situations in all Member States. We commend the efforts of the Council to improve the working methods of the Working Group on the universal periodic review. The Government adopted a

plan of action to implement the UPR recommendations and collaborates with other stakeholders in the implementation process, including consultations with the National Human Rights Commission, civil society and the United Nations Development Programme.

The principles of non-selectivity, practicality, timeliness and effectiveness with regard to the human rights issues and situations of human rights violations are of crucial importance. We welcome open dialogue on ensuring transparency, independence and inclusiveness in the work of the Council, as well as on strengthening treaty bodies.

Significant progress was made under the ongoing open-ended intergovernmental process towards identifying concrete and sustainable measures needed to strengthen and enhance the effective functioning of the human rights treaty bodies system. My delegation supports the extension of the process and welcomes initiatives on the improvement of the working methods of the system and the effective participation of Member States in the treaty implementation reporting process. My delegation is prepared to take active part in the discussions on the ways forward recommended by the co-facilitators of the process.

We welcome the mandate of the Human Rights Council to promote advisory services, technical assistance and capacity-building in the implementation of human rights instruments. We note the need of small countries for greater institutional capacity and improved professional skills to participate in the process of improving the Council and strengthening treaty bodies.

In conclusion, I would like to reiterate my Government's commitment to continued cooperation and readiness for enhanced dialogue with the Council. Mongolia aspires to become a responsible and committed actor in the activities of the Council. We maintain our standing invitation to all international human rights mechanisms.

We emphasize that international cooperation in the field of human rights is essential for the full achievement of the purposes of the United Nations as declared in the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action. Mongolia supports positioning the Council as a platform for enhanced and open discussion and better international cooperation on the various complex issues with positive implications for national policies on human rights.

**Mr. Haniff** (Malaysia): My delegation warmly welcomes Ambassador Henczel, President of the Human Rights Council, to the General Assembly to introduce the report of the Council (A/68/53).

Malaysia, together with the international community, places high expectations on the work of the Council. Malaysia believes in a non-confrontational approach to the issue of human rights, pushing instead for constructive dialogue and cooperation. The current international trend of politicizing human rights by some has not served the cause of human rights. Some countries continue to emphasize political and civil rights to the virtual exclusion of economic, social and cultural rights. Malaysia is of the view that civil and political rights cannot be separated from economic, social and cultural rights, as they are two sides of the same coin.

Allow me to touch on a few matters relating to the Council. First, the universal periodic review (UPR) is a primary human rights mechanism, premised upon the equal treatment of all countries. Malaysia is pleased to report that the country successfully underwent its second UPR round in October 2013. A total of 104 Member States participated in the interactive dialogue on Malaysia's UPR. As a result, Malaysia received a total of 232 recommendations on how to further promote and improve the human rights situation in the country. Recommendations addressed to Malaysia will be thoroughly studied and considered by the relevant ministries and agencies. Malaysia will announce its decisions on the recommendations received when its final report is presented for adoption by the Human Rights Council at its twenty-fifth session in March 2014.

Malaysia took full advantage of the opportunity afforded by the UPR to update Member States on the positive developments pertaining to the measures that have been undertaken by the Government to improve and enhance human rights in the country. During its UPR, Malaysia did not attempt to hide any domestic shortcomings and openly admitted the challenges faced by the Government in its efforts to further promote and protect human rights.

To ensure the full participation of all countries to the UPR process, Malaysia is of the view that the Voluntary Fund for Financial and Technical Assistance, established by the Council in its resolution 6/17, should be strengthened and put to work in order to provide a source of financial and technical assistance

to help countries. That will in particular benefit least developed countries and help them implement the recommendations emanating from their reviews.

Secondly, while there has been some progress in addressing the eradication of poverty brought about by widening inequality, high and volatile food and fuel prices and menacing environmental risks, such progress continues to be held hostage to the impact of the global financial and economic crisis. Malaysia is of the view that despite the bleak world economic situation, developed countries should, to the best of their ability, fulfil their pledges made in terms of official development assistance. Even without the current economic crisis, developing countries have struggled to ensure that the economic and social rights of their peoples were upheld. Thus, they, including the poorest and most vulnerable sectors of society, are now even worse off with the knock-on effects of the crisis.

Thirdly, Malaysia welcomes the Council's continued attention to the human rights situation of the Palestinian people in the occupied Palestinian territory. We must never forget that the core issue for the Palestinians is their inalienable right to statehood. Malaysia calls for the realization of the right of the Palestinians to self-determination through a final solution to the conflict that would ensure the creation of two States living side by side in peace and security and based on the 1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as the capital for the Palestinian State. We urge the Council to continue to press on the issue and to ensure that Palestinians are afforded their basic rights as human beings, including their right to an independent State.

Fourthly, on the process of strengthening and enhancing the effective functioning of the human rights treaty bodies system, in view of the complexity of human rights issues, Malaysia believes that the intricate responsibility to promote and protect human rights necessitates deeper cooperation among stakeholders. While human rights treaty bodies are in place to keep a check and balance over States parties' compliance and efforts to improve related human rights situations, it is apparent that there are still significant issues to be addressed to assist those bodies to fulfil their objectives. Malaysia remains committed to continue supporting efforts aimed at strengthening the human rights treaty bodies.

In conclusion, we hope that the Council will carry on its good work in promoting and protecting human rights for all. It should not yield to the agendas of certain

quarters. The many achievements to date, including the successful implementation of the UPR mechanism, have served to put the Council in good stead, especially in its mandate to ensure greater promotion and protection of human rights for all. However, Malaysia believes that more can always be done to enhance and uphold the rights of victims of human rights violations. Malaysia is committed to that end and will continue to strongly support the work of the Council.

**Mr. Ja'afari** (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): We would like to begin by welcoming the President of the Human Rights Council, Mr. Henczel, to New York. We wish him every success in the important tasks entrusted to him. He can count on our constructive cooperation to ensure that human rights are dealt with on an equal footing and in a fair manner, without the politicization, oppression and double standards that have eroded our achievements in New York and Geneva.

We have read the Human Rights Council's report (A/68/53) very closely and with great interest. The report touches on a series of matters that are extremely important, particularly with regard to violations of human rights in the occupied Arab territories, including the occupied Syrian Golan and the occupied Palestinian territories. Forty-five years have passed since the unjust Israeli occupation of the Syrian Golan. In spite of the Council's call on Israel, the occupying Power, to implement the resolutions of all United Nations bodies and agencies — including, of course, the Commission on Human Rights, which became the Human Rights Council — Israel continues to defy the will of Member States. Israel refuses to adhere to the hundreds of such resolutions. The Israeli authorities have perpetrated war crimes and crimes against humanity, and they expressly claim those crimes with no sense of accountability or punishment. They do so despite numerous questions from international public officials and certain capitals regarding the Israeli exception: the reasons for Israel not being subject to prosecution and not being brought to justice.

We are concerned by the attempts by some to turn the Human Rights Council into a private entity that serves political agendas that are very narrow in nature — serving the agendas of influential States — in contradiction to the spirit prevailing at the establishment of the Council and its mandate. That was made clear in the adoption of resolutions with political objectives and dimensions in which the Council condemns the

violations of human rights in some developing countries but fails to do so in other countries. The Council disregards the mechanisms responsible for monitoring human rights situations and their violations in developed States. Racism reigns in those influential countries, as well as xenophobia, racial discrimination, discrimination against indigenous peoples and discrimination against immigrants, as well as cruel and inhumane treatment of detainees and refugees in countries that have militarily invaded other sovereign countries. Those countries have violated the right to development by imposing restrictive unilateral economic measures against the populations of developing countries, in addition to expressly sponsoring terrorism.

The resolutions on Syria mentioned in the Human Rights Council report are based on media information from a single source. The resolutions are in harmony with the political trends in certain States, which only want ill for Syria and its Government and its people. None of those resolutions have called for ending the terrorism carried out by armed terrorist groups, nor do they call for them to be disarmed. Those resolutions do not call on the countries that finance and support them to end their military, political and media support. Their support is through the Sanctions Committee of the Security Council — and the Security Council records mention those States by name and show all the weapons going into Syria and what borders the weapons crossed. In addition, the sponsors of the resolutions, who claim to defend human rights in Syria, do not talk about the deterioration of the economic and humanitarian situation in Syria, which is a result of the restrictive unilateral economic measures imposed by the States of the European Union, the League of Arab States and the United States. Those measures are a threat to the sovereignty and independence of States and a flagrant violation of the Charter of the United Nations and the principles of human rights.

Every year the General Assembly adopts resolutions against unjust, restrictive and arbitrary unilateral economic measures. Despite that, some Member States of the Organization insist on the imposition of such unilateral sanctions, which are considered punishment. That continues in spite of the report of the Independent Commission of Inquiry, a subsidiary body of the Human Rights Council. The report lists the effects of those economic measures on the welfare of the Syrian people, and says there are various armed terrorist groups committing acts of violence and terrorism against the Syrian people. It is therefore clear today that there are

capitals that boast about rejecting a peaceful solution to the situation in Syria, and those States admit explicitly to arming terrorist groups. They are working to directly train those groups in States that are neighbours of Syria.

My country is suffering from a humanitarian crisis whose causes are now well known. Terrorism has struck my country through systematic violations organized by terrorist groups that are armed, financed and supported from outside. Outside support for armed groups, and their key role in the Syrian crisis, has thus been proved: it is clear and no longer requires discussion.

The Syrian Government has proposed every possible type of cooperation in order to reach a solution to the Syrian crisis on the political and humanitarian fronts. We regret, however, that the Human Rights Council makes no positive mention of the enormous efforts of the Syrian Government. Nor does the report mention the presence of armed terrorist groups in Syria. The Council does not take into consideration the Syrian Government's obligations under the Charter of the United Nations and international humanitarian law to oppose such groups and all those who support them. On the contrary, we see intense efforts on the part of some States members of the Council — directly responsible for the deterioration of the political and humanitarian situation and for bloodshed — to repeatedly adopt unilateral political resolutions on Syria aimed at pushing the Government to give up its sovereign rights.

We have not seen the Human Rights Council condemn or reject the two-year boycott of its work by the occupying Power of Israel. We therefore wonder if Council members' reaction would be so lukewarm if other States besides Israel boycotted it. Can the Council tell us about the measures it has taken to hold Israel responsible for its refusal to cooperate with the dozens of resolutions and the fact-finding commissions of inquiry on the numerous crimes it has perpetrated over the decades in the occupied Arab territories? Has it made even modest efforts to implement resolutions on human rights in the occupied Syrian Golan? No, that has not happened. Apparently, the Council does not consider the humanitarian situation in the Golan a priority. Why? Because that tragic and dangerous situation involves Israel, the occupying Power.

The politicized resolutions of the Council have harmed, and will harm, the efforts that went into its creation and establishment as a body capable of dealing with all violations of human rights at the international level with clear criteria applicable to all and without

discrimination. That was the reason we arrived at the principle of the universal periodic review of the Human Rights Council. Those resolutions will be an obstacle to the objective role that some have taken on at the international level in order to settle the Syrian crisis. Indeed, they will encourage greater rigidity over holding a "Geneva II" conference and the ongoing armed violence, killing and bloodshed. They block the signs of cooperation and overtures from Syria, which was made very clear recently with the International Commission.

I would also like to speak about what has been said by the representatives of Qatar and Kuwait. Qatar's flagrant interference in Syria's internal affairs is a fact that has been condemned by Member States. That interference in our domestic affairs has been manifested in financial and media support for terrorism, and by training terrorists and recruiting them from every region of the globe. They have been transported en masse through Turkey and Jordan in order to carry out terrorist acts in Syria that have resulted in tens of thousands of victims and destroyed 50 per cent of Syria's infrastructure. The representative of Qatar described the situation in Syria as dangerous and terrifying, but she does not know that the Qatari authorities are responsible for that terrifying situation, which has harmed thousands of Syrians. The Qatari authorities condemned a Qatari poet to a life sentence for writing a poem criticizing the former Emir. After the new Emir was installed, the poet's sentence was commuted from life imprisonment to 15 years. We are talking here about the human rights situation in the State of Qatar.

Concerning Kuwait, I will read a single paragraph published today in *The New York Times*, from an article on the Gulf States' financing of Kuwaiti Salafists and jihadists in Syria. The article quotes a Kuwaiti Salafist who collects funds for aiding terrorists in Syria. His name is Al-Mteiri.

*(spoke in English)*

"Once upon a time we cooperated with the Americans in Iraq," said Mr. Al-Mteiri, a former soldier in the Kuwaiti Army, recalling the American role in pushing Iraq out of Kuwait in 1991."

Then Al-Mteiri says, "Now we want to get Bashar out of Syria, so why not cooperate with Al-Qaida?" He acknowledges that he is cooperating with Al-Qaida.

By the way, Al-Qaida is listed on the Security Council list of entities and individuals sponsoring

terrorism. The article also says that hundreds of millions of dollars have been shipped just by this guy in Kuwait to Salafist and Takfiri groups in Syria. I think that is the best reply to my colleague from Kuwait.

**Mr. Tsymbaliuk** (Ukraine): Ukraine is strongly committed to the promotion and protection of human rights and pays special attention to United Nations activities in that area, in particular within the framework of the Human Rights Council. We positively assess the work of the Human Rights Council during the reporting period reflected in the Council report (A/68/53) that covers its twenty-second, twenty-third and twenty-fourth regular sessions.

With its systemic thematic approaches and urgent responses to pressing human rights situations, the Council has demonstrated its ability to act as a key United Nations body responsible for the promotion and protection of human rights worldwide. The report provides clear evidence of the Council's competence and credibility in addressing urgent country-specific situations. At the same time, Ukraine believes that genuine and effective prevention is a pragmatic alternative to averting human rights violations.

Seeking to strengthen the international community's ability to effectively prevent human rights violations, Ukraine consistently proceeds with the realization of its initiative — the Human Rights Council resolution on the role of prevention in the promotion and protection of human rights, which is traditionally adopted by consensus.

We consider the special procedures of the Council and the universal periodic review (UPR) mechanism as extremely important tools for the protection of human rights, which can improve the situation of human rights globally. Ukraine has issued a standing invitation to all thematic special procedures and received a number of visits upon their request. We would like to encourage countries to closely cooperate with the special procedures of the Council, in particular by honouring the standing invitations issued. We are also strongly committed to the universal periodic review mechanism. Ukraine presented its national report for the second cycle of the review to the Working Group on the UPR in a timely manner and was successfully reviewed in October 2012, with the further adoption of the UPR outcome by the twenty-second session of the Council.

We commend the closer Council cooperation with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner

for Human Rights, more coordinated actions, and the improvement of institutional relations between the Office and the Council.

With regard to supporting the further mainstreaming of human rights issues into a broad range of activities and further strengthening cooperation in the field of human rights within the United Nations system, my delegation emphasizes the need to avoid duplication in the work of the Human Rights Council and the Third Committee.

Ukraine is committed to the promotion and protection of human rights worldwide. In that regard, we have presented our candidature for membership in the Human Rights Council for the period 2018 to 2020. My country remains determined to engage in the work of the Council in a constructive manner. As a member of the Council, Ukraine would exert every effort to ensure that the Council fulfilled its mandate in the most effective and comprehensive manner.

**Mr. Elbahi** (Sudan) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, my delegation associates itself with the statement made by the representative of Gabon on behalf of the African Group.

We would like to take this opportunity to extend our thanks to the President of the Human Rights Council for introducing the report of the Council (A/68/53) and for his complementary briefing to the Assembly. We wish him every success in carrying out his tasks. By the same token, we would like to congratulate the recently elected new members of the Council. We hope that their terms of office will provide further impetus to the work of the Council and its mechanisms.

The establishment of the Human Rights Council, seven years ago, was an important achievement for the General Assembly and its various bodies in addressing human rights issues on the basis of the equality of all Member States, and as reflected in the universal periodic review, to which all Members without exception are subject. The Council also provides advice, in accordance with its mandate set out in resolution 60/251, through the special procedures system. That is an important service, provided that mandate holders adhere to the principles of impartiality and non-politicization and avoid selectivity, in line with the spirit and letter of the mandates and the Code of Conduct for Special Procedures Mandate-Holders of the Human Rights Council, adopted by the Council in

its resolution 5/2 and re-emphasized in its resolution 11/11, of June 2009.

My delegation would like to underscore the Sudan's continued cooperation with the Human Rights Council with a view to promoting and fostering human rights in my country. In that connection, we would like to point out that the Sudan submitted its report to the universal periodic review, accepted its recommendations and established a national commission to implement them. It is now ready to participate in the second review cycle in the same spirit in which we have been cooperating with the Independent Expert on the situation of human rights in the Sudan.

As a demonstration of my Government's commitment to comprehensively promoting human rights, the Sudan has prepared its tenth national plan of action to promote and strengthen human rights, which is a broad framework aimed at achieving that important goal. It integrates a wide-ranging vision of all the relevant aspects in that important field. That accomplishment is in addition to numerous endeavours undertaken by my Government to help all of its citizens enjoy their rights without discrimination.

With regard to promoting the rights of the child, we have, among other things, acceded to the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its two Optional Protocols — on the involvement of children in armed conflict and on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography. The Sudan has ratified Conventions No. 182 and No. 138 of the International Labour Organization and has used provisions of those international instruments to draw up national legislation, including the 2010 law on the protection of children. We have also established a comprehensive supplementary law to protect minors, which has been in effect for two years. In addition, the laws related to the armed forces, the security sector and the police contain provisions that categorically prevent the conscription or recruitment of children in their ranks.

To protect and defend the rights of people with disabilities, we have signed and ratified the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. Based on its provisions, in 2009 we enacted a national disability act and have established a national council for the disabled.

With regard to protecting the rights of women, my country has put in place a comprehensive 25-year strategy for the advancement of women. We are also cooperating in the field with the Office of the Special

Envoy for the Sudan and South Sudan. Furthermore, the Government has established an office to protect women and children from violence. We also established economic projects for women, particularly in rural areas.

As for the elderly, my Government has established centres to take care of them. In addition to strengthening the family relations ingrained in our society, the elderly are given preference when receiving care and we cherish and honour them.

With regard to institutional frameworks, the Sudan's advisory council on human rights plays a pivotal role in following up on international commitments and national obligations and plans related to human rights. We would also like to state that the independent human rights commission established in accordance with the Paris Principles has been successfully functioning for two years. That is in addition to other mechanisms that we do not have time to discuss at this meeting.

At the bilateral level, my Government has signed agreements to secure its borders with neighbouring States in order to prevent human rights abuses, particularly breaches related to human trafficking and other relevant violations. Accordingly, my Government has signed bilateral treaties with neighbouring Chad, Libya, the Central African Republic and South Sudan. In that connection, I would like to state that the Sudan recently adopted a national law that prevents trafficking in humans and in human organs.

At the national level in general, my country has contributed to the stability of the situation in Darfur, Blue Nile and Southern Kordofan, and violence has significantly decreased. That paves the way for fostering human rights in those areas.

In conclusion, my delegation calls for sufficient funds to be made available to enable the Council and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights to thoroughly fulfil their responsibilities and obligations and to promote internationally agreed human rights with a view to treating all human rights equally, without favouring some at the expense of others, and without involving new concepts that have not been internationally agreed to, Member State must be adequately consulted with regard to any new mechanism or programme to be undertaken by the Council or the High Commissioner.

We also call for the adoption of a comprehensive approach to fostering and protecting human rights that

considers exempting developing countries from punitive measures for violations and lifting the sanctions on some of them and removing restrictions on their exports — an approach that takes into consideration climate change and the major reasons that stand in the way of the efforts of Governments, particularly the Governments of developing countries, to fulfil their obligations towards this important issue.

**Mr. Montwedi** (South Africa): My delegation associates itself with the statement delivered on behalf of the African Group on the subject of the report of the Human Rights Council (A/68/53).

South Africa welcomes this opportunity for a dialogue with the President of the Human Rights Council on the annual report of the Council and its activities during its seventh cycle year. We also appreciate the vision and leadership role played by the presidency in carrying out the mandate of supporting the work of the Council.

South Africa supports the Council's mandate as a principal United Nations body responsible for universal respect for and the protection of all human rights and fundamental freedoms for all. That should be without distinction of any kind and must be carried out in a fair and equal manner, as enshrined in the founding resolution 60/251. We wish to recall that the Council was established as a subsidiary body of the General Assembly and body of first instance in addressing all human rights and fundamental freedoms through cooperation and genuine dialogue, free from politicization, selectivity and double standards. It is that resolve that impels the Council to give balanced attention to economic, social, cultural, civil and political rights, as well as to the realization of the right to development. The decisions and resolutions of the Council are important and should be given time to run their course, without the same texts being duplicated in the Third Committee even before they are implemented.

We therefore remain convinced that the spirit and vision embodied in the Proclamation of Tehran, adopted during the International Conference on Human Rights in 1968, that the full realization of civil and political rights without the enjoyment of economic, social and cultural rights is actually impossible and hollow. The achievement of lasting progress in the implementation of human rights is dependent upon sound and effective national and international policies of economic and social development.

The current financial and economic crises will no doubt have a negative effect on the work of the Council, particularly with respect to the numerous recommendations in decisions and resolutions, which need to be implemented in an equal manner. In that context, South Africa remains convinced that the universal periodic review (UPR) is the pillar for the work of the Council in the fulfilment of States' human rights obligations and the improvement of the situation on the ground in every country.

In realizing that objective, the Voluntary Fund for Financial and Technical Assistance for the implementation of the UPR must be properly resourced for the purposes of assisting States to develop their national capacities and expertise for the implementation of the Council's recommendations.

Similarly, we attach great importance to the work of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights generally and in the context of resolution 48/141, which established the Office in the first place and directed it to work under the direction of the Secretary-General, within the framework of the overall competence, authority and decisions of the General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council and the erstwhile Commission on Human Rights, whose mandate now devolves on the Human Rights Council. It is imperative to emphasize that the resolution outlines the mandate of the Office of the High Commissioner as the promotion and protection of all universally recognized human rights — as well as, more importantly, one issue that is usually forgotten by the United Nations human rights system in Geneva, namely, the realization of the right to development. Again, we cannot overemphasize that point.

We therefore call for a more visible allocation of resources and other support to enable the Office to carry out its mandate. It is also our view that, in addressing key economic, social and cultural rights issues, the Office of the High Commissioner should align itself with the overall, overarching vision for the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). South Africa is of the view that the current post-2015 development agenda should not deflect our attention from achieving the MDGs.

We are encouraged by the Council's work in the area of the practical enjoyment of economic, social and cultural rights, which remain key to eradicating extreme poverty, inequality and underdevelopment worldwide. We are of the view that more can still be

done in that area. South Africa appreciates the work currently being undertaken relating to the roles and responsibilities of transnational corporations and other business enterprises with respect to human rights. We look forward to a more systematic and focused approach to dealing with the human rights violations that are often caused by such entities. It should be pointed out that they still remain unaccountable in international human rights law.

It is our firm belief that the application of the principle of non-discrimination remains a cornerstone of the practical enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the Council's work. Its efforts on racial discrimination should be further reinforced and strengthened. It is particularly critical that programmes, decisions and resolutions in the area be fully implemented and funding provided for them as well. My delegation remains seriously concerned about the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2014-2015 contained in document A/68/6, which reduced funding for the follow-up and implementation of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action and the fellowship programmes associated with that process.

We wish to reiterate the call for a more equitable allocation of funding to implement the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action as part of the global effort to eradicate the scourges of racism everywhere. South Africa attaches great importance to decisions and resolutions in the area of racial discrimination, and we remain concerned about the lack of progress in ensuring that the independent eminent experts' group previously appointed by the Secretary-General is sufficiently supported to enable it to carry out its mandate to follow up on the implementation of the Declaration and Programme of Action.

South Africa welcomes the Council's attention to the situation of human rights in the occupied Palestinian territories and wishes to emphasize that the Palestinians' practical enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms hinges on the realization of their right to self-determination.

The recent attempts to erode the institution-building text of the Human Rights Council have highlighted serious governance gaps in the work and authority of the Council. The Council's credibility depends on that critical institutional foundation. It is equally incumbent on the Council to always promote dialogue and cooperation in carrying out its mandate. Matters with serious political ramifications should always be

consulted on by the full membership of the United Nations through the General Assembly, in line with paragraph 5 of resolution 60/251.

Finally, we share other delegations' concerns about with the manner in which issues are raised in Council resolution 24/24, adopted during its twenty-fourth session in September, entitled "Cooperation with the United Nations, its representatives and mechanisms in the field of human rights", particularly regarding the designation of a United Nations-wide senior focal point to promote the prevention of, protection against and accountability for reprisals and intimidation. It is our firm belief that that matter requires further reflection and deliberation by the General Assembly, including a determination of the way forward. South Africa is strongly opposed to any act of intimidation or reprisals against any individual or group, and we believe that domestic jurisprudence should be used to deal adequately with matters of that nature.

We wish to assure the President and the President of the Human Rights Council of our support and cooperation in leading the Council on its path to fulfilling its mandate, which remains our vision going forward.

**Mr. Mahmoud** (Egypt): I would like at the outset to express our gratitude to Ambassador Henczel, President of the Human Rights Council, for introducing the Council's report today (A/68/53).

Egypt aligns itself with the statement made by the representative of Gabon on behalf of the African Group, and would like to make the following remarks in its national capacity.

The annual report of the Human Rights Council on its regular and special sessions reflects the Council's efforts to build national capacities and promote economic, social, cultural, civil and political rights on an equal footing. We commend its significant role in promoting all human rights through the universal periodic review process, which remains the only relevant mechanism for addressing human-rights situations in a comprehensive and balanced manner. We also commend the Council on its work in promoting the protection of human rights in the occupied Palestinian territories, including East Jerusalem and the occupied Syrian Golan, as well as in combating racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia, intolerance, negative stereotyping and stigmatization based on religion or belief.

The Human Rights Council has a crucial role to play in supporting Member States in their efforts to promote and protect human rights. In order to succeed, it should fully respect the principle of sovereignty and uphold the principles of the Charter of the United Nations. It should act with even-handedness, impartiality and non-selectivity by avoiding the following predicaments: first, politicizing the Human Rights Council's work to serve political objectives that are not related to the protection of all human rights and fundamental freedoms; secondly, injecting controversial notions such as sexual orientation and gender identity in an attempt to legitimize such notions, which have no legal foundation under national humanitarian and human rights law; and thirdly, using the Council as a tool to legitimize interference in the domestic affairs of Member States, contrary to the Charter of the United Nations.

The Human Rights Council should not become a tool for any groups or Member States who claim moral superiority over other members and designate themselves guardians of universal values that they themselves have defined, disregarding the diversity of social, cultural, legal and religious values of other Member States, which will eventually undermine the universality of the cause of human rights.

The international community has a responsibility to strengthen the role of the Human Rights Council by ensuring the full and timely cooperation of all Member States with international fact-finding missions and missions of enquiry created by Council resolutions and to ensure the implementation of the recommendations of those missions. It should also ensure that mandate holders fully respect their mandates and their codes of conduct.

Finally, Egypt reaffirms its commitment to support the work of the Human Rights Council in respecting all human rights and fundamental freedoms by promoting the implementation of the recommendations of the universal periodic review by all States, without distinction, and by encouraging the engagement of all States with mandate holders.

**The Acting President:** We have heard the last speaker in the debate on agenda item 64.

I shall now call on those representatives who wish to speak in exercise of the right of reply. I would like to remind members that rights of reply should be limited to 10 minutes for the first intervention and five minutes

for the second and that delegations must speak from their seats.

**Mr. Al-Hamadi (Qatar)** (*spoke in Arabic*): We have taken the floor to reply to the claims and accusations made by the Syrian regime's representative against my country. The representative of that regime continues to distort realities and facts, trying to depict the revolution of the free people of Syria, who are calling for their rightful, legitimate rights, as if it were terrorism supported from abroad, despite the resolutions and reports that condemn the acts of that regime. However, through this international body, we reaffirm that the State of Qatar will continue to act so as to enable the voice of the brotherly Syrian people to reach this body as they call for the realization of their legitimate rights.

**Ms. Alsaleh (Syrian Arab Republic)** (*spoke in Arabic*): We apologize for asking for the floor again under this agenda item, but we would like to reply to the accusations made by the State of Qatar just now. The repetitive statements by representatives of Qatar, trying in vain to persuade the international community that what is happening in Syria is the responsibility of the Syrian Government, is an insult to the intelligence of those who are present here. It is a revolting joke and insult. We advise the representative of Qatar to read the media reports of international organizations, highlighting the role of Qatar in funding the terrorism of Al Qaida in my country.

The Syrian people send a message to Qatar. It goes as follows: Stop lying! The Syrian people will hold the regime of Qatar accountable for all its crimes against the Syrian people very soon. In Doha, there are those who should pay for the blood shed by Syrian citizens. A change in the leadership of the Qatari Government does not mean that those who sponsor Wahabi fundamentalist terrorism in my country will stop.

**Mr. Al-Hamadi (Qatar)** (*spoke in Arabic*): As I mentioned in my first intervention, it was not merely an accusation, it was in reference to General Assembly resolutions, particularly resolutions 67/262 and 66/253, and reports by the Human Rights Council and the decisions taken by the Human Rights Council, as well as the resolutions and presidential statements of the Security Council.

**Ms. Al-saleh (Syrian Arab Republic)** (*spoke in Arabic*): We apologize yet again for taking the floor. We are saddened that the representative of Qatar mentions resolutions of the General Assembly and the Human

Rights Council, although those resolutions were not adopted by consensus. Those resolutions were promoted by his country and other countries with very notorious political agendas against my country. We therefore advise the representative of Qatar not to interfere in the

internal affairs of Syria, and we promise him that the Syrian people will hold Qatar accountable very soon.

**The President:** The Assembly has thus concluded this stage of the consideration of agenda item 64.

*The meeting rose at 1.20 p.m.*