

UNITED NATIONS HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL
FIRST SESSION
(Geneva, 19 - 30 June 2006)

Programme of work for future sessions of the HRC

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Statement by H.E. Ambassador Wolfgang PETRITSCH
Permanent Representative of Austria
on behalf of the European Union

Geneva, 29 June 2006

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Mr President,

I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union.

The Acceding Countries Bulgaria and Romania, the Candidate Countries Turkey, Croatia and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia*, the Countries of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidates Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, as well as the Republic of Moldova align themselves with this declaration.

The EU welcomes this opportunity to exchange views on the programme of work for the year 2006/2007. We have actively participated in the discussions that were facilitated by Norway, and we commend the Norwegian delegation for the professional and impartial way that it led these discussions.

Mr. President,

While discussing the framework for the programme of work, the EU consistently took into account the following considerations:

1. We think that the agenda and programme of work of the HRC should provide a balance between predictability in the HRC's work and flexibility in the Council's ability to respond effectively to emerging issues and situations. That means that the programme of work should be indicative for the debates that will take place in the HRC, but should not fix all issues to be dealt with in the course of the year. The proposed framework meets this consideration
2. The programme of work should set out in broad terms when issues will be discussed in plenary debates. Such an agreed, advance programme of work could provide predictability for NGOs, NHRIs and delegations to allow planning for upcoming meetings. This predictability will also be beneficial to the Special Procedures, which should have the opportunity to participate actively, through an interactive dialogue, in all sessions of the Council, including during the first year.
3. In our view, the programme of work should avoid dichotomies between different types of rights and the perceived selectivity of the CHR agenda. We think it is essential to work on the basis of one generic item, dealing with the promotion and protection of human rights as a whole, while avoiding artificial differences between Economic, Social and Cultural Rights on the one hand and Civil and Political on the other. In the same vein, we want to avoid any separate categorisation of situations of

* *Croatia and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.*

concern whose consideration is mandated by GA 60/251. Throughout the Council should in, our view, work on the guiding principle that no legitimate human rights issue, brought forward by any UN member state, can be refused.

Mr. President,

The EU acknowledges that this first year of the HRC will mainly be a transitional year. Nevertheless we hope that some of the principles that I have just outlined will form the basis for further considerations. It is not some, but all stakeholders that will benefit from such an approach.

In this regard we wish to commend Norway for the open, transparent and fair manner in which these consultations have been conducted. We believe that the outcome represents a fair compromise, in that spirit the European Union is ready to support this Programme of Work.

Thank you Mr. President.
