

ISRAEL

Statement by:

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Informal consultation of the plenary on the Human Rights Council

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Distinguished Co-chairs and Delegates,

I would like to congratulate the President of the General Assembly for convening this valuable meeting and extend my appreciation for the professional manner in which the co-chairs are conducting these deliberations.

Israel would like to commend other Member States for pursuing reforms of the human rights bodies within the United Nations system, as stated in paragraph 159 of the Outcome Document, "The Council should address situations of violations of human rights, including gross and systemic violations, and make recommendations thereon. It should also promote effective coordination and mainstreaming of human rights within the United Nations system."

Israel supports the Secretary-General's initiative to replace the Commission on Human Rights with a smaller, action-oriented Human Rights Council. Along with other Member States, Israel would like to see deliberations on the Human Rights Council completed as soon as possible. As the Secretary-General has noted, the Commission on Human Rights suffers from a severe "credibility deficit." It is our view that the Human Rights Commission and the ideals it stands for suffer from the fact that a small yet vocal number of its members are themselves flagrant violators of human rights. It is unacceptable that countries with confirmed records of human rights violations are permitted to be members of the prominent body of the UN that addresses human rights affairs. This most unfortunate situation needs to be amended if the UN wishes to maintain credibility and efficiency in its role as guardian of human rights around the world.

Distinguished Co-chairs,

Israel is deeply committed to the pursuit of human rights set out by the United Nations, which goes in line with a core tenet in Jewish doctrine: *tikkun olam*, 'repairing the world.' In this context, I would like to note two historical facts. First, prominent Jewish NGO's made important contributions to the Commission on Human Rights and played a pivotal role in 1947 in bringing about its establishment. Second, Israel was a member of the Commission for seven years, during the 1960's and 1970's. Today, Israel continues to be committed to the founding principles of the UN and we stand with this committee in advocating change in support of these valuable principles.

We are looking forward to the establishment of the new Human Rights Council and consider the much-needed reforms as a necessity in maintaining the international community's commitment to these important values. In our view, the Council's mandate would be to address the most severe human rights abuses, provide technical assistance, and promote human rights as a priority worldwide.

Distinguished Co-chairs,

Israel believes that there is a vital process before us, which would greatly serve the pursuit of universal human rights. For this reason, we would like to propose that the Council rely on certain criteria, including the following:

First, while taking into account regional representation, membership into the Council should be based on adequate human rights records. We cannot expect the Council to fulfill its goals when members blatantly violate human rights laws within their own countries.

Second, the Council must enjoy the logistical support of an efficient and effective secretariat.

Third, the Council should employ procedural measures to prevent any exploitation of the agenda. There are other forums for political debates. Those states seeking partisan gains should not overwhelm the Council with their own singular pursuits, thereby adding to the body's politicization and undermining the effectiveness of its work. Such procedural measures should include preventing multiple agenda items from targeting one particular situation or state.

Fourth, while we deliberate on the establishment of the Council, attention should be given to a review of the work of the Special Rapporteurs.

Distinguished Co-chairs,

Israel believes that informal discussions, like this one, are useful in shaping the much-needed reform of the UN system. Nevertheless, we must ensure that our changes create actual advances. Missing this opportunity to create substantial procedural changes would simply fall short of our goals. As stated in the preamble of the Universal Declaration on Human Rights, "the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world." There is simply too much at stake, for the noble value of human rights, for the credibility of the United Nations as an institution, for the Member States who wish to serve its aims, and for the citizens of the world who rely on our efforts to improve their living conditions and quality of life.

Thank you