



JAPAN

Permanent Mission of Japan to the United Nations

866 United Nations Plaza, New York, N.Y. 10017 Phone: (212) 223-4300 · www.un.int/japan/

Press Release

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Remarks by Ambassador Shinichi Kitaoka
Deputy Permanent Representative of Japan
Informal Consultation of the General Assembly
Human Rights Council
1 November 2005

Distinguished Co-Chairs,

In general, the details of the working methods and procedures of the future Human Rights Council, which the Global Summit Outcome Document charges us with discussing, should be decided by the Council itself. What we here in the General Assembly have to do is to give the Council general direction, so that it can then deliberate on the details in accordance with that direction.

Before it can do so, however, it is necessary for us to reach basic agreement on issues we have discussed, namely, mandate, function and organizational matters such as the procedure for electing members. As Japan already expressed its position on those issues at previous informal meetings, we shall not repeat all of them. We would, however, like to emphasize the importance of making the Human Rights Council a standing body and equipping it with various measures it needs to "address situations of violations of human rights, including gross and systematic violations." Among these measures are giving it the power to dispatch fact-finding missions, provide technical assistance, and submit reports and recommendations to other UN bodies. It is also important to explicitly mention the establishment of easier procedures for convening extraordinary sessions in case of emergency situations of serious human rights violations, since there seems to be broad agreement that extraordinary sessions should be convened swiftly in such instances.

Working methods should also be decided by the Council itself. Having said this, Japan also considers that the General Assembly should give the Council general direction on how to improve and rationalize special procedures, as well as how to establish simple and unburdensome procedures for conducting universal and periodic reviews. Concerning the current work practices of the Commission of Human Rights, Japan supports the opinion expressed on October 18 by New Zealand on behalf of CANZ that "resolutions should be shorter and action oriented."

In addition, as it seems likely that the Human Rights Council will hold several regular sessions a year, one option, in the interest of efficiency, would be to alternate between discussing regional human rights situations and thematic issues. Also, as we proposed the idea of institutionalizing a system of field assessment missions at our October 18 meeting, we would like this proposal to be examined by the future Human Rights Council.

Concerning the transitional arrangement, we may not need to go into details, but it is obviously important to realize a prompt and smooth transition from the Commission to the Council. In order for our efforts on United Nations reform to bear tangible fruits as soon as possible, we do hope that smooth transition and actual functioning (establishment) of the Council will take place at an early date--during the next session of the Commission on Human Rights, for example. Thus it will be necessary for further consideration to be given to specific ways of transforming the Commission of Human Rights to the Council by the parties concerned.

In closing, Japan strongly hopes that we will ensure the decision of our leaders to establish the Council at an early date is implemented by reaching conclusions on issues including the basic framework of the Council, its election procedure and other key elements as soon as possible during this session of the General Assembly. I would like to reiterate that Japan for its part is prepared to make any effort necessary to achieve that end.