



JAPAN

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Press Release

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

Distinguished Co-Chairs,

Allow me to express at the outset the basic view of my delegation regarding today's agenda, that is, the Human Rights Council should take on the organizational structure that best enables it to achieve the basic objectives stipulated in the Outcome Document, that is "to strengthen the United Nations human rights machinery". When we discuss organizational issues such as the status, size, composition and membership of the Human Rights Council, as proposed in your letter of 19 October, we should therefore bear this in mind.

Status

We believe that the Human Rights Council should be one of the principal organs of the United Nations, considering the weight the Outcome Document attaches to the role it is to play. What is truly important, however, is that this new body be an effective and credible organization that will make a substantial contribution to mainstreaming human rights and improving actual human rights situations on the ground. To that end, it is necessary, among other things, to equip the Council with the power to report directly to other UN bodies. In addition, it must be a standing body if it is to address human rights situations whenever and wherever they may develop around the world. As to how to make the Council a standing body, one rough, preliminary idea would be for the Human Rights Council to hold regular sessions twice a year but also be given authority to easily convene extraordinary sessions when necessary. As we need to realize the early establishment of the Human Rights Council, we should take pragmatic approach to place the Council under the General Assembly for the time being, and review its status after a certain period of time--five years from now, for example.

Size

To "address situations of violations of human rights, including gross and systematic violations and make recommendations thereon," as stipulated in the Outcome Document, in effective manner, the Human Rights Council needs to be able to take prompt and action-oriented measures when such violations are committed. From this viewpoint, we believe a smaller membership is desirable, with due consideration given to the current size of the Commission on Human Rights.

Composition

Concerning composition, consideration should be given to achieving proper regional representation. In the Commission of Human Rights, however, the allocation of seats to regional groups does not precisely reflect their actual size, and we note in particular that the Asian Group is under-represented. We hope that this imbalance will be corrected in due course. And in this context, we consider the proposal made by our distinguished Mexican colleague at the last meeting, quite interesting.

Membership

We should discuss the issue of membership from the viewpoint of enhancing the Human Rights Council's credibility. In this sense, we would prefer that members were elected directly and individually by a two-thirds majority of the General Assembly, with due respect for regional representation. In this connection, we regard as interesting the reference made at the informal consultation on 11 October by the distinguished representative of Lichtenstein to the election method of the International Criminal Court. For similar reasons, we support the idea that the commitment of members to protect and promote human rights should be confirmed through measures such as voluntary acceptance of a universal periodic review, active cooperation with Special Rapporteurs and Independent Experts, or make pledges to abide by the highest standards of human rights.

I would like to conclude my remarks by noting that in presenting the views of Japan, our fundamental objective has been to create a truly effective, efficient, credible, legitimate and action-oriented Human Rights Council, and we shall continue to work to that end.