



*Permanent Mission of the Republic of Zimbabwe
to the United Nations*

STATEMENT

BY

H.E. B G CHIDYUSIKU
AMBASSADOR AND PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE TO THE
UNITED NATIONS

ON

AGENDA ITEM 71: HUMAN RIGHTS
THIRD COMMITTEE, 60TH SESSION OF THE UNITED NATIONS
GENERAL ASSEMBLY

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Mr Chairman

Let me begin by congratulating you and members of the Bureau on the excellent manner in which you are conducting the business of this Committee. My delegation will continue to support your efforts in ensuring a successful conclusion to our deliberations.

Mr Chairman

At this stage during the 59th session, as indeed during other previous sessions, my delegation and many other delegation spoke of the interconnectedness of human rights and of the need to treat all human rights equally. We called on this Committee to reject what we saw as a deliberate tendency on the part of some Member States and groups to create a hierarchy of rights and to suggest that some rights are more deserving of attention than others. We are encouraged that the 2005 World Summit re-affirmed the indivisibility of human rights and called for the promotion of “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.” We are further encouraged that the on-going consultations on the creation of a Human Rights Council are giving this issue the attention it deserves.

Mr Chairman

My delegation has always emphasised the need for dialogue and cooperation as essential tools in the approach to the promotion of human rights. We hope that these will be the tools of choice for the Human Rights Council when it is

established and for any other bodies concerned with the promotion of human rights. Once adopted, the cooperative approach will hopefully do away with the selectivity, double standards and hypocrisy that has characterised the human rights agenda thus far. It will create partnerships between and among countries and organisations, and remove the unhelpful labels of accuser and accused. The result will be improved enjoyment of all human rights by all.

Regrettably, old habits die hard, even when it is clear that they benefit neither those who practise them nor those that are their targets. Many delegations, including mine, have spoken against turning this forum or any other body concerned with human rights issues, into an instrument of the foreign policies of some countries or groups. Yet, even during this session, we continue to see the same countries/groups abusing this Committee by seeking to settle political scores. In the end, the Committee loses focus as the debate becomes entangled with issues unrelated to the promotion of the full enjoyment of all human rights by all.

Mr Chairman

During the current debate, we listened to the European Union, as usual, making very negative comments about my country and others and pontificating about the observance of human rights in their good old fashioned do it as we say and not as we do way. Indeed, listening to them, one would be excused for thinking they are without blemish. Assuming that they are genuinely concerned with the promotion of the protection of human rights, we would hope that the starting point would be their own countries. This would go a long way towards building their credibility. How about first addressing the

gross abuses of the rights of refugees that have become rampant in a growing number of European Union countries? What about the ill-treatment of minority groups such as the Roma? Why do we not hear the same group and its friends name and shame those among them who have committed and continue to commit human rights violations in Iraq, Afghanistan and Guantanamo Bay? Amnesty International has expressed concern that “racism and (racial) discrimination) are a significant problem in Europe”, and that the European Union “has paid no more than lip service to the question of protecting human rights in the context of the fight against terrorism”. The European Union waxed lyrical here about human rights situations in selected developing countries, but saw nothing wrong with some of its members, including the current chair, drawing up legislation that will “allow for indefinite detention without trial and the use in court of secret intelligence evidence, potentially extracted through torture or other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment.” It is clear their concern is not about human rights, but the promotion and preservation of selfish interests. That is not what this Committee is about and that cannot be translated into an agreed agenda of the United Nations.

Let me conclude, Mr Chairman, by acknowledging the unintended contribution of those who have engaged in selective targeting of countries, to the current debate on the establishment of a Human Rights Council. What they have achieved is to highlight the need to depoliticise the human rights agenda and to give serious thought to the proposal for a universal periodic review.

I thank you.

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