

INTERVENTION BY DR GJ MTSHALI, AMBASSADOR AND PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA: INTERACTIVE DIALOGUE WITH SPECIAL PROCEDURES: 12 JUNE 2007

Mr President

Since the inaugural session of the Human Rights Council on 18 ~~January~~^{June} 2006, the work of this body has mainly been on establishing its institutional mechanisms.

The Council has during this period also engaged in substantive human rights issues. My delegation wishes to commend the Council for this engagement in matters of substance although there was ^{an} urgency placed on it to complete the institution building exercise within one year of its establishment as instructed in General Assembly Resolution 60/251.

Mr President

South Africa ^{remains} is concerned about the issue of country mandates. Their role in ~~contributing~~ to the demise of the Commission on Human Rights is an established fact. We strongly believe that in order for this Council to function in a spirit of cooperation and dialogue, it should terminate all country mandates. We should not allow politicisation, selectivity and double standards to influence the work of this institution.

Mr President

South Africa holds the firm view that country mandates account, in large parts, for the existing mistrust^{*} and the general negative spirit within this new Council. It is therefore incumbent on all of us to take a new approach and employ different strategies ~~and approaches~~ to country situations. My Government's preference is for the Council to raise the threshold to two-thirds majority as a minimum criterion for the Council to address itself to country situations.

~~In this regard, my delegation reiterates the position of the African Group that such mandates should have no place in the work of the Human Rights Council.~~

^{country} ~~Instead,~~ ^{*} the Council's work should be guided by the principles of universality, objectivity and non-selectivity as called for in General Assembly Resolution 60/251.

My delegation is of the view that the establishment of the Universal Periodic Review Mechanism, the reviewed and rationalised thematic mandates and the Special Sessions of the Council will and should ensure that the Council monitors the observance of human rights by Member States of the United Nations.

I thank you.