



המשלחת הקבועה של ישראל לאומות המאוחדות
PERMANENT MISSION OF ISRAEL TO THE UNITED NATIONS

Statement by:

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Explanation of Vote on the Resolution on the
Human Rights Council

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Check before delivery

On behalf of the Government of the State of Israel, I would like to express my sincere appreciation to the President of the General Assembly, H.E. Ambassador Jan Eliasson for his efforts and stewardship in conducting these very sensitive and complicated deliberations on the establishment of an effective Human Rights Council. I would also like to commend Ambassadors Kumalo and Arias for their valuable contribution to this effort.

Half a century after the Commission on Human Rights was established, the Secretary General courageously initiated a painful yet necessary process to substantively reform the UN system and address the existing failings in the Commission on Human Rights. His report and unequivocal recommendations provided a clear framework for understanding the major challenges and acute problems facing this body today. Foremost among these is the "declining credibility" and the "legitimacy deficit" of the Commission, which is keenly felt in my country, and which has sadly become characteristic of this body in the eyes of the public at large.

Borne out of the ruins and the ashes of the Second World War, the United Nations, with the Commission on Human Rights at its forefront, was intended to serve as a beacon of resolve and hope, to restore humanity to mankind and safeguard the promise of "Never again". The preamble of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights acknowledges its foundation in the "barbarous acts which have outraged the conscience of mankind..".

The Jewish People have a fundamental interest in the UN's promise of protection of human rights and freedoms. For three thousand years the Jewish Bible has taught us : "thou shall not.. favour the person of the mighty; but in righteousness shalt thou judge thy neighbour;" "The stranger that sojourneth with you shall be unto you as the home-born among you, and thou shalt love him as thyself;"

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights conveys similar thoughts: "All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood". "Everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms set forth.. without distinction of any kind, such as race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status".

Among its founding fathers and keenest advocates back in 1946, before the State of Israel was established, were prominent Jewish leaders and Nobel prize winners such as Rene Cassin who helped build an edifice of values and morals. The UN vision was our vision.

These are principles that the nation of Israel holds dear. It is therefore with profound regret that we have borne witness to the corruption of those ideals in the UN's central human rights agency, the Commission on Human Rights, over many decades. Instead of equality, we got discrimination. Instead of tolerance, we experienced racism and exclusion. Instead of human dignity, we suffered the indignity of double standards applied only to the Jewish State.

Therefore, Israel has been closely involved in the negotiations in order to create a viable, professional and responsible Human Rights Council, which would renew public confidence in it and regain legitimacy and credibility.

Unfortunately, the resolution falls significantly short of the objectives that will enable the Council to live up to those ideals. This resolution contains worrying omissions, including the absence of sufficient benchmarks for membership, which poses the danger that the new Council would not be a significant improvement over its predecessor.

Israel believes that the General Assembly should not allow those responsible for the failure of the Commission on Human Rights to lead the Council down the same road. Indeed, radical failure calls for radical change. This change, unfortunately, is not evident today.

Israel, along with others, had hoped to avoid voting on this resolution, which should ideally be adopted by consensus. However, at this juncture in time, this resolution fails to address several fundamental issues of concern, as expressed in the letters circulated by various delegations, and the explanations voiced here today. Consequently, Israel was compelled to vote against it.

As I conclude, with your permission Mr. President, I would like to add a personal note. I feel I would be remiss if I did not express to you my admiration for the effort, energy, and passion you have invested in the effort to assure the establishment of a credible and viable new Council. You have done so with impeccable integrity and remarkable honesty. We are only sorry that the end result fell short of enabling us to vote in favor of the final outcome.

Thank you Mr. President.