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AS DELIVERED

ADDRESS OF THE PRESIDENT OF THE HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL
AMBASSADOR LUIS ALFONSO DE ALBA

The following is the address of Ambassador Luis Alfonso de Alba, upon his election as President of the Human Rights Council:

Almost 60 years ago, with the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, we started a long path towards the construction of a system to promote and protect these rights. What we have achieved so far is not minor. We find the best proof of this in the importance acquired by human rights and in response to the numerous victims of violations throughout the years.

The international community knew how to develop a broad system of protection under frequently adverse conditions. Now, by creating this Council, it has the opportunity to enhance that system and, even more so, to bestow upon it a truly universal, fair and balanced character.

Nowadays, Member States accept that human rights are paired with the other two main objectives of our Organization: to preserve international peace and security and to attain development. From now on, human rights are not just going to be a priority in the work of the United Nations: they will also constitute one of its three fundamental pillars, as proposed by the Secretary-General last year.

It is time to show with facts how solid these commitments are and to demonstrate our unwavering resolve to incorporate all actors of our societies in this effort.

As of today, we start building a new institution able to respond to the expectations of our peoples. It is a complex task that will certainly require gradual measures, inherent to any transition, but also, and foremost, it provides us with the opportunity to overcome the deficiencies that contributed to discredit the institutions that preceded this Council.

We should make the achievements of the Commission our own. The seven fundamental treaties, the special mechanisms and procedures and, in general, the legal framework and all instances that monitor their compliance, are invaluable resources to ensure the universality and indivisibility of human rights and their effective respect.

But we should also develop new instruments and working methods. It is essential to conceive mechanisms for both the prevention and sanction of human rights violations, working with a mid- and long-term vision, on the one hand, and responding to emergency situations in a timely fashion, on the other.

It is of great importance to agree on a balanced agenda that reflects our will to address all rights in all countries, to identify gaps and to avoid unnecessary duplications to strengthen the existing mechanisms. It is also necessary to improve coordination with bodies and agencies within and outside the United Nations System, and at the same time, to foster the incorporation of a human rights perspective in all their activities.

Let's embark on the task of generating, in a spirit of dialogue and cooperation, a mechanism of universal and periodic evaluation to know the improvements and more pressing duties every State has in human rights issues. If we can achieve this, we will avoid the excessive politicization and the use of double standards of which the former Commission was accused.

In this task, it is also crucial that both the Council and the Office of the High Commissioner of Human Rights strengthen international cooperation in developing national capacities.

Let's open our doors to a full participation of key actors, such as civil society organizations and national human rights institutions. Their presence in the field is useful to all of us and we should capitalize on that.

Let's take advantage of all the technological advances to publicize our work to make it transparent. We represent peoples who are better informed every day and who wish to participate in the decision-making processes. Let's invite the entire civil society to participate in this transforming process.

We are before a crossroads of a historic nature. We can and should contribute to improve the respect of human rights all around the world, and at the same time, we can and should contribute to the reform and strengthening of the multilateral system.

I therefore call upon all those who will participate in this process to bear in mind that a strong Council can only emerge from the legitimacy it will gain in effectively addressing the demands of men and women who wish a full respect of their rights

Let us give preference to dialogue over confrontation, cooperation over sterile critics, and openness over closeness.

Before concluding, allow me to thank you on behalf of the Mexican Government for the opportunity to contribute to the cause of human rights from the chairmanship of this Council. Also, let me thank the Latin American and Caribbean Group for the steadfast and committed support they gave me to hold this position and to all of you for the trust placed in me to guide this important process.

I wish to express my appreciation for the patient and determined work of President Jan Eliasson and of his two co-facilitators, Ambassadors Arias of Panama and Kumalo of South Africa, who made the adoption of Resolution 60/251 possible, but especially, my

appreciation for their intelligence and their unwavering commitment for the best results of multilateralism.

I also wish to express my appreciation for the efforts carried out by the Secretary-General of our Organization, Mr. Kofi Annan, to adapt it to the challenges we face; and the personal commitment of the High Commissioner, Louise Arbour, and her Office for the establishment of this Council.

To conclude, I want to reiterate my personal commitment to the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations, with the victims of human rights violations and with all of you. I am convinced of the strength of common resolve when embarking on lofty tasks and that neither a single person, nor a single State can, on their own, make a difference. By creating the Human Rights Council, we have a second chance, let's not waste it.

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