

4 November 2016

## **71<sup>st</sup> session of the General Assembly**

### **Statement by H.E. Peter Thomson, Report of the Human Rights Council**

Excellencies,  
Distinguished Delegates,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I would like to begin by welcoming to the General Assembly the President of the Human Rights Council, Ambassador Choi Kyonglim.

I would also like to take this opportunity to congratulate once again the 14 new members of the Human Rights Council who were elected by this General Assembly last week.

2016 has been a landmark year for the Human Rights Council.

As the international community has commemorated the 10th anniversary of the council's establishment, we have had the opportunity to reflect on its achievements, and to consider its pre-eminent place in global human rights.

By any measure, it is clear that the Human Rights Council has played a critical role in promoting the universality, interdependence, and indivisibility of all human rights. It has resolutely strengthened our collective efforts to protect human rights across our world.

The comprehensive and interconnected human rights mechanisms that the Council oversees – including the Universal Periodic Review, Special Procedures mandate holders, and treaty bodies – have put the Council at the forefront of our work to uphold existing human rights standards. They have allowed us to establish new norms; provide accountability and remedies for violations; and ensure that the human rights dimensions of emerging challenges are elevated and understood.

Time and again, the Human Rights Council has shone a light on human rights violations across our world and brought global attention to gross and systematic violations requiring urgent action by the international community.

The Universal Periodic Review has been central to the Council's success. The UPR is based on the fundamental premise of equal treatment of nations, and of enabling all Member States to engage with one another on an equal footing, in order to improve human rights in all countries.

The open and inclusive nature of the Universal Periodic Review process has also been fundamental to its credibility, and I welcome the participation of civil society, national human rights institutions, academia and other human rights defenders in these processes.

To this end, I encourage all Member States to do all that they can to support civil society to conduct their work freely in our societies, and to participate fully in human rights mechanisms.

Distinguished Delegates,

As global attention shifts towards implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, we should all recognize that the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals is the best way towards realizing the human rights of all people.

Indeed, the 2030 Agenda is premised on the fundamental recognition of human rights for all people which, if implemented effectively, will allow us to: build peaceful and inclusive societies; empower women and girls; tackle discrimination and inequality; end exploitation, trafficking and torture; promote the rule of law; eliminate extreme poverty; and combat climate change.

The Human Rights Council has a central role to play in promoting the human rights dimensions of the 2030 Agenda. Ensuring that implementation of the agenda is pursued in a manner consistent with international human rights standards demands attention from all of you.

Distinguished Delegates,

While important progress has been made on humanity's behalf by the Human Rights Council, it is clear that much more work remains to be done.

In the decade ahead we must stand firm in our support of the work of the Human Rights Council, however difficult that might be for some of us from time to time. It will be essential that the Council remains visible and credible, retains its universal character, and continues in its central role in the United Nations architecture.

Safeguarding the human rights of the people of our world requires vigilance and universality. I leave you with Nelson Mandela's famous words, "To deny people their human rights is to challenge their very humanity."

Thank you.