

The following is an excerpt from the official meeting records of the General Assembly on March 15, 2006.

The complete transcript is available at
http://www.hrw.org/un/elections/pdfs/ga_mtg_en.pdf (English)
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Mr. Malmierca Díaz (Cuba) (*spoke in Spanish*): I shall now speak in explanation of vote.

The decision to establish the Human Rights Council was adopted out of the urgent need to put an end to the profound discredit into which the Commission on Human Rights had fallen as a result of the political manipulation, hypocrisy and double standards imposed on its work by the United States and the European Union.

The draft submitted today to the General Assembly is by no means a response to the challenge that brought us together. Nothing in that text will prevent the repetition in the new Council of the traditional manoeuvres engaged in by the Powers of the North to unjustly condemn the countries of the third world.

We were hoping for the establishment of a Council that would contribute to the strengthening of the international system to promote and protect human rights through genuine cooperation. However, the United States and its allies insist on ensuring that the punitive and sanctions approach will prevail, now exacerbated by the capacity to suspend the rights of those who question, interfere or simply disagree with the empire's designs of hegemonic domination.

In the months that have elapsed during this process, we have watched with indignation as the United States and its allies have exerted heavy pressure and resorted to their traditional blackmail to break the resistance to that new plot. The text to be adopted does not represent, as many would have us believe, a balance in negotiating positions. It is a negative reflection of the dangerous unipolar world that the Bush administration is trying to legitimize — a world submitted to the force of power, in which reason and justice would have no value.

We have never been deceived by the strident objections of Washington's representatives. The fact that the United States has requested a vote on the text today does not mean that it was not conceived and negotiated behind the scenes in order to accommodate that country's principal demands, sacrificing the vital interests of the countries of the South.

The attacks by the current United States administration on the text being adopted today demonstrate its arrogance. It loses nothing with this draft; on the contrary, it has secured new ways of fomenting confrontation, hatred and punishment, and by protesting today it merely intends to extract further concessions. This means that, no matter how much its interests are satisfied, the super-Power always wants more in its craving for hegemony and domination.

Draft resolution A/60/L.48 has serious omissions and it includes elements that do not reflect the positions expressed throughout the process by the majority of Member States. Cuba therefore reaffirms its serious reservations to its content. The draft resolution being adopted today reduces the number of members relative to the Commission on Human Rights, to the detriment of the representativity of the body. If human rights are universal and are everybody's responsibility, why should the decision-making mechanism on these issues be limited? In fact, did not the High-level Panel recommend that, on these grounds, the new body should be one of universal membership?

The draft resolution endorses a suspension clause pertaining to Council members that could be activated with the support of two thirds of those present and voting, without establishing a minimum number of required votes. A country elected with the support of more than 96 States

could have its rights suspended by the will of a lesser number of countries. We peoples of the South, besides continuing to be the target of unjust condemnatory resolutions, will in the future be subjected to the latent danger of being deprived of our access — won by election — to that body.

There is no limit to the pernicious and useful practice of imposing politically motivated resolutions on the countries of the South, without subjection to or respect for any criterion. The right to development — the main demand of the great majorities on the planet — has become a thing of the past. The struggle against racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related forms of intolerance has been negligently deleted.

A Council with these features will not only allow the United States and its allies to have a strengthened tribunal of inquisition against the peoples of the South; it will also ensure them the impunity they already enjoyed in the Commission on Human Rights.

Will it be possible in the new Council to adopt a resolution demanding that the United States be accountable and assume responsibility for torture and other serious human rights violations perpetrated in the illegal United States naval base of Guantánamo, in Abu Ghraib prison or on flights and in secret detention centres operated in Europe by the Central Intelligence Agency? The current United States Administration is seeking to impose its spurious interests in the current reform and redesign process of the international system that the United Nations represents. Those who mistakenly believe that a policy of appeasement and systematic concessions would allow us to gain time and sate the appetite of the neo-conservatives who have taken power in the White House should study the experiences of the past and weigh the lessons learned from those cases in which the international community has tolerated, in a conciliatory and negligent manner, the aggressive actions of a Power with hegemonic aspirations. Cuba is doing its duty by denouncing these facts.

Notwithstanding its serious reservations, and taking into account, above all, the requests it has recently received from friendly delegations, Cuba will vote in favour of draft resolution A/60/L.48 and will work in the Human Rights Council to maintain justice, international law, genuine dialogue and the very necessary international cooperation to protect and promote all human rights for all peoples and all individuals.