

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)
http://www.hrw.org/un/elections/pdfs/ga_mtg_fr.pdf (French)
http://www.hrw.org/un/elections/pdfs/ga_mtg_ar.pdf (Arabic)

Mr. Maurer (Switzerland) (*spoke in French*): Switzerland wholeheartedly voted in favour of resolution 60/251 for the following reasons.

First, the resolution represents a good compromise and strikes a fair balance between widely divergent perspectives and ambitions. It also represents a new commitment on the part of Member States to promoting universal human rights. We recognize that, for a large majority of the United Nations membership, the right to development is of particular importance. We are committed to promoting all human rights everywhere and without distinction.

Second, the resolution establishes the Human Rights Council in Geneva, which is of great importance to my delegation. We reiterate our readiness to provide delegations with the best possible working environment in Geneva.

Third, the resolution strengthens the United Nations human rights machinery by ensuring, inter alia, more frequent sessions throughout the year and a universal periodic review mechanism.

Fourth, the resolution outlines a new approach to human rights. We commit ourselves to the implementation of all human rights through cooperation, support of national protection systems and the adoption of a cooperative over a confrontational approach.

Fifth, the resolution creates a new institution with greater legitimacy. Members are not only more carefully selected, but must also cooperate with the Council and undertake voluntary commitments. The General Assembly would receive a referral in the event of a serious problem.

Sixth, the resolution creates a framework for a fresh start and for exploring new forms of engagement. This is an opportunity to build new trust by addressing human rights in a spirit of honesty, equal treatment and the avoidance of double standards. It is our sincere hope that we will not revert to old patterns of behaviour.

Seventh, the resolution provides a good basis for concrete and effective country-specific work. Dialogue with the Governments concerned is critical in that regard.

Eighth, the resolution strikes an appropriate balance between the imperatives of effectiveness and inclusiveness. The Council must be inclusive in terms of membership, but in the most serious incidences of human rights violations the international community must be able to act. Its failure to do so would hamper the Council's legitimacy.

Lastly, the resolution builds on the positive achievements of the Commission on Human Rights and sets a timetable to review and improve the United Nations human rights machinery.

It is now up to the Council and all Member States to engage enthusiastically in future review efforts that could lead to strengthened United Nations machinery for the protection and promotion of human rights.

Clearly, not all of our ambitions are being fulfilled in this resolution. But considerable progress has been achieved, while still maintaining a good balance between views that at times are irreconcilable. We do not share the hard-line approaches of some who try to make us believe that they are the only ones fighting for ambitious human rights machinery. All too often too high

ambitions are coverups for less noble aims and are oriented not at improving the United Nations but at weakening it. This cannot be our objective.

The adoption of the resolution constitutes an important strategic achievement for the overall United Nations reform process. Much remains to be done on the human rights reform agenda in the months ahead. To be truthful, change is a process, not an isolated event. My delegation hopes that we can engage constructively in this important process. The resolution foresees different reviews. Let us tackle them in a constructive and open spirit, and let us not get bogged down in political squabbles.

Lastly, Mr. President, I would like to take this opportunity to thank you personally for your outstanding commitment, as well as that of Co-Chairs Kumalo and Arias, and all of those who committed themselves to this draft, which is a new asset in United Nations multilateralism.