

Special Session of the Human Rights Council on the human rights situation in Darfur

Tuesday, 12 December 2006

Mr. President,

When the General Assembly created the Human Rights Council, it did so on the clear understanding that this new body had an important responsibility in responding promptly to any situation of gross and systematic violations of human rights, thereby contributing to the prevention of further violations of human rights. The evidence that the human rights situation in Darfur is indeed an appalling human rights emergency has been before us for months already. If it was not for the fact that the Human Rights Council is still in an early stage of institution-building, its silence about the ongoing gross human rights violations in Darfur would have been a worrisome signal. We therefore welcome today's emergency session and in particular the extraordinarily broad support for its convening, extended by countries from all regions. In this context, we wish to commend the delegation of Finland as the EU presidency for the transparency and openness of the consultations held so far on the session and its outcome, and we do share the hope that this cooperative approach will serve as a precedent for the future.

Mr. President,

Cooperation is also the key word when it comes to putting an immediate end to the ongoing violations of human rights and humanitarian law in Darfur. The Government of Sudan has a primary obligation to protect all civilians, in particular women and children, against all forms of violence. While we deeply deplore that not all parties to the conflict have signed the Darfur Peace Agreement, this must not be invoked as a justification for the lack of swift and effective action by the Government to protect the civilian population. Combating the prevailing culture of impunity and bringing the perpetrators and instigators of grave human rights violations to justice is vital for the prevention of a further deterioration of the human rights situation in Darfur. This will require the full cooperation of the Government with the Human Rights Council, the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights and the International

Criminal Court. Only such genuine cooperation in the interest of protecting the human rights of all civilians will bring real change on the ground. We also call on all parties to the conflict to ensure full, safe and unhindered delivery of humanitarian assistance to the people in need and to immediately stop all violence and attacks against relief workers.

Mr. President,

Liechtenstein fully supports the idea of sending an expert mission to Darfur, headed by the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Darfur. Only an independent expert mission can ensure an impartial assessment of the human rights situation which is firmly rooted in the understanding that universal human rights standards must apply to all member States of the United Nations.

I thank you.