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THE SECRETARY-GENERAL
ADDRESS TO THE HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL
Geneva, 19 June 2006

Mr. President Luis Alfonso de Alba, let me first congratulate you – or rather, let me congratulate the Council on choosing you as its first President.

This choice augurs well indeed for the Council's future work. We at UN Headquarters in New York know you well, from your time in the Permanent Mission of Mexico there. We know you as a most accomplished diplomat and a resolute champion of human rights – in fact, definitely the right person for this crucial task.

Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen:

It is hardly an exaggeration to say that the eyes of the world – especially the eyes of those whose human rights are denied, threatened or infringed – are turned towards this chamber and this Council.

A great effort has been made, by Member States and by civil society worldwide, to bring us to this point.

And a new era in the human rights work of the United Nations has been proclaimed.

I trust that all members of the Council are fully aware of the hopes that have thus been raised, and are determined not to disappoint them.

They certainly should be aware, because all of them, in seeking election to this Council, have made pledges both to respect human rights at home and to uphold them abroad. Moreover, the General Assembly has required them to uphold the highest standards in the promotion and protection of human rights, fully cooperate with the Council, and submit themselves to the universal periodic review mechanism during their term of membership.

Their peoples – and the peoples of the world – will be watching to see whether those standards are indeed upheld.

Dear friends,

Let us briefly recall the journey that has brought us here. Last year, in my report “In Larger Freedom”, I stressed that human rights form the third