



**STATEMENT BY
HE MR MICHAEL ZILMER-JOHNS
STATE SECRETARY
DENMARK**

**ON THE OCCASION OF THE 1ST SESSION OF THE
HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL**

GENEVA, 21 JUNE 2006

Check against delivery

Mr Chairman,

Distinguished members of the Human Rights Council

Ladies and Gentlemen

Much has been said lately about the Commission on Human Rights – praise as well as denunciation. Let us not forget, that the Commission gave us the international Bill of Rights. It gave us the treaty body system. It gave us Special Procedures. And it provided the central forum for global consideration of thematic and country specific human rights issues. If discredit is due, we should take it upon ourselves as members and observers of the Human Rights Commission. No institution is better than its constituency.

But the 60 years since the opening of the Commission took their toll, and it was high time to revise the central human rights forum in the United Nations. As co-inventors of the concept, we warmly welcome the decision by the General Assembly last March to establish a permanent Human Rights Council. I hope and believe that the new Human Rights Council will prove itself to be a stronger and more effective body than its predecessor, but again: Much will depend on Member States and Observer States – the constituency. We should be inspired by the highest standards in developing the structure, agenda and work programme of the Human Rights Council. And our behaviour and action in the Council should be based upon equally high standards and full respect for human rights.

We consider it extremely important that the Council meets in a number of sessions throughout the year as decided by the General Assembly. Human rights are violated all the year round and should be dealt with as they happen, not just 6 weeks every spring. The permanent nature of the Human Rights Council should also make it possible to deal with all the highly important thematic human rights issues in an innovative and more flexible, pragmatic and focused manner.

Another opportunity for improving UN workmanship in the field of human rights offered by the General Assembly decision is to intensify our relationship with civil society, with NGOs