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**Statement by H.E. Dr Bernard Bot**

**Minister of Foreign Affairs  
of the Kingdom of the Netherlands**

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**1<sup>st</sup> Session of the United Nations Human Rights Council**

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**Geneva, 19 June 2006**

*Check against delivery*

**Statement by H.E. Dr Bernard Bot, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, at the High Level Segment of the 1<sup>st</sup> Session of the UN Human Rights Council, Geneva, 19 June 2006**

*Mr President, Excellencies, distinguished delegates, ladies and gentlemen,*

1. It is a privilege for me to address the very first session of the Human Rights Council of the United Nations. This session is an important achievement, but at the same time only a relatively modest first step. The many sceptics who thought this Council would never be created have been proved wrong. But of course the Council has yet to prove its true value.
2. Before I present my country's views on how this Council can become the Human Rights cornerstone that many people in this world hope it will be, let me first congratulate you, Ambassador De Alba, on your election as president, and let me congratulate the other members of the Bureau on their election. I would also like to thank you, Mr President, for guiding the preparation process.
3. In addition, let me commend the President of the General Assembly, Mr Jan Eliasson, for his important work in leading the negotiations on the establishment of the Human Rights Council. I would also like to thank the Secretary-General of the United Nations, Mr Kofi Annan, and the High Commissioner for Human Rights, Ms Louise Arbour, for their invaluable support for the establishment of this Council. Finally, I also wish to acknowledge the dedicated non-governmental organisations and individuals who helped to make this Council a reality.
4. Let me reiterate my country's strong support for mainstreaming human rights into all United Nations organisations and activities, including the field of development cooperation. A strong Human Rights Council could serve as a catalyst and a watchdog in this effort.

*Ladies and gentlemen,*

5. Today we celebrate the official opening of the first meeting of the new Human Rights Council. This is truly a historic day. The Council makes human rights a top priority