



PHILIPPINES

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Statement

of

**H.E. Alberto G. Romulo
Secretary of Foreign Affairs
Republic of the Philippines**

**High-Level Segment of the
1st Session of the Human Rights Council**

Geneva, 22 June 2006

A FRESH START
Dr. Alberto G. Romulo
Secretary of Foreign Affairs of the Philippines
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Mr. President, congratulations on your election as the first chair of our Human Rights Council.

The Philippines has every confidence in your ability not only to lay the groundwork but to set the tone for carrying out the Council's important tasks.

Our Delegation pledges to give its support to help you and your Bureau in charting a path for our Council in its inaugural year.

Our vision of the Council

The Philippines envisions the Human Rights Council as enabling the community of nations – in cooperation and partnership – to protect and promote the human rights of all the world's peoples.

We see this Council as a forum in which the global community can deal with human-rights violations devoid of hidden political agendas.

We also see this Council as a body geared towards maximizing capacity building and technical assistance for human rights promotion and protection.

We see the Council as a partner, not an opponent, of states in question, particularly those in need of international assistance in the field of human rights.

In an increasingly complex world, burdened by old problems and saddled with new dilemmas, the creation of the Council gives us a chance for a fresh start.

To this inaugural session, we must exert our every effort to lay solid foundations and to erect strong, basic structures that will enable this Council to live up to our expectations.

Drawing on a rich heritage

In choosing our building blocks for the Council, we should draw from the positive aspects of the Commission on Human Rights.

The Commission's heritage includes the international human rights instruments and norms that were developed either through its initiative or under its patronage.

There is also the Commission's network of complaints mechanisms, designed to give voice to human-rights victims and to redress violations.

The Commission also succeeded in involving global civil society – as well as other stakeholders – in a global human-rights debate.

At the same time, we should avoid the political pitfalls that limited the Commission's effectiveness, and which led to acrimonious debates or deadlocks.

Our new Council must always be wary of the hazards of selectivity and of politicizing human-rights issues.

The primary role of the state

In our efforts to ensure that complaints of human-rights violations are given a proper airing, victims' rights should be foremost in our minds.

And in all this, we should not lose sight of the vital role of the state.