68TH SESSION OF THE UNITED NATIONS OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY

STATEMENT OF THE AFRICAN GROUP

ON THE PRESENTATION OF THE ANNUAL REPORT OF THE UNITED NATIONS HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL

DELIVERED BY H.E. MRS. MARIANNE BIBALOU

AMBASSADOR, DEPUTY PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE

13 NOVEMBER 2013

Please check against delivery
Chairperson,

I have the honor to deliver this statement on behalf of the African Group.

The African Group welcomes the President of the Human Rights Council, H.E. Ambassador Remigiusz Achilles Henczel and wishes to extend our appreciation for the opportunity to dialogue on the activities of the Council during its seventh cycle year, presented in document A/68/53. We also welcome the President’s leadership of this august body throughout the year.

Chairperson,

The African Group wishes to reaffirm the Council’s mandate as contained in UNGA resolution 60/251 in promoting universal respect for the protection of all human rights and fundamental freedoms for all, without distinction of any kind and in a fair and equal manner and make recommendations thereon. It is on the basis that the Group has been consistently supportive of the work of the Council.

The Group views the principles on which the Council’s mandate is underpinned as important, particularly with respect to the principle of cooperation and genuine dialogue aimed at strengthening the capacity of Member States to comply with their human rights obligations. It is therefore incumbent upon the Council in discharging its mandate to firmly ground its work on universality, objectivity and non-selectivity in the consideration of human rights issues.

Chairperson,

It is no doubt that the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) remains the most distinct mechanism of universal application to assist States in fulfilling their human rights obligations. In our view, this mechanism remains relevant and key towards the promotion and protection of human rights. It is therefore critical that the UN Voluntary Trust Fund for Financial and Technical for the Implementation of the UPR be properly resourced for the purpose of assisting States to develop national capacity and expertise for the implementation of the Recommendations.

The Group reiterates its support for the Mechanisms and Special Procedures of the Council and the important work they undertake in the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms.

Chairperson,
The Council has in recent times faced governance challenges, particularly with respect to the erosion of the provisions of the Institution-Building (IB) package, which is the solid foundation on which its mandate rests. The Group is concerned that this erosion could, in the long run, present credibility gaps in its work.

Whilst the Group has also noted the immense work that the Council engages in at each session, the challenges presented by shortage of funding remains unresolved. The Africa Group believes therefore, that these funding shortages will affect the implementation of the decisions and resolutions of the Council. We also wish to recognize the key role played by the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights as the Secretariat of the Council, in ensuring that appropriate support is given to the Council in line with the framework UNGA resolution 48/141.

Chairperson,

The Annual Report tabled before the Committee presents a comprehensive picture of the deliberations which have taken place during the Council’s seventh-cycle year. The Group is also cognisant of the provisions of UNGA resolution 60/251 operational paragraph 5(i) which provides for recommendations to be made by the Council to the Third Committee of the General Assembly, hence its support for the universal membership of the UNGA to deliberate on these important matters.

Chairperson,

The African Group believes that HRC resolution 24/24 recently adopted during its 24th Session in September 2013, has made critical recommendations to the UNGA with respect to the designation of the UN-Wide Senior Focal Point to “prevent, protect against and promote accountability for reprisals and intimidation”. It is the view of the Group that such a matter needs further reflection and deliberation by the general and universal membership of the UNGA prior to a determination being made. Equally so, the Group believes that a feasibility study should as a matter of necessity be undertaken to take stock of the different mechanisms currently being utilised in other UN bodies prior to such a determination being done by the Human Rights Council. The Group wishes to reiterate its position on rejecting any form of reprisals on individuals or groups.

In conclusion, the African Group wishes to reassure you Mr President, our support in preparations of the 8th cycle year of the HRC.

I thank you.