Statement by Counselor Seif-alla Kandeel
Mission of Egypt to the United Nations
At the General Debate of the Third Committee on
Agenda Item 69: “Promotion and Protection of Human rights”
22 October 2013

Mr. Chairman,

The Charter of the United Nations clearly underscores in its preamble the
determination of the Peoples of the United Nations "to reaffirm faith in fundamental
human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person, in the equal rights of
men and women and of nations large and small". The promotion and protection of
human rights has become one of the primary objectives of national governments of
UN member states. Over the last six decades, international cooperation in the field of
human rights' promotion has increased, both at the regional and global levels. Yet,
while the Peoples of the United Nations agree on the ultimate objective of protecting
human rights, respecting human dignity, and guaranteeing equal rights for all, they
have not agreed on the specific steps on the way forward. Cultural differences,
disguised interventionism, and political bickering are only few examples of the
obstacles the United Nations is facing while dealing with human rights issues.

Most countries continue to face several challenges in their attempts to promote
human rights at home. The classical example is the question of striking the delicate
balance between security concerns and human rights, and between economic and
social rights in one hand and political and civil rights on the other. Member states
have not agreed yet on how to balance the role of the international community
against the role of sovereign states, with many countries voicing concerns about the
possible misuse of human rights as a pretext for intervening in internal affairs.

The above-mentioned challenges to international cooperation on human rights
should not in any way restrain our attempts to achieve consensus on promoting
international human rights instruments and protecting fundamental human rights for
all. International cooperation on human rights should be based on even-handedness,
respect of differences, and mutual understanding. To achieve these goals, we believe
the international community should emphasize the following elements as
fundamental pillars of human rights:
- Define the scope of human rights to include economic, cultural and social rights,
on the same footing as political and civil rights;
- Respect cultural, social and religious differences between societies and communities, and refraining from imposing narrow cultural standards;
- Recognize that the role of the international community is to support national efforts to enhance and develop the capacity of national institutions in the field of human rights, without affecting the territorial integrity or the sovereignty of member states;
- Addressing the development gap between the peoples of the world, in order to mitigate the negative repercussions of globalization and immigration;
- Avoid double standards and politicization of human rights issues.

One of the lessons learnt through the Arab revolutions, is that democratization is home-grown. It originates from within societies. It is based on their value systems. It reflects their realities, their needs and priorities. The international community should respect these priorities. It should support peoples' efforts to consolidate democracy, promote human rights, and fundamental freedoms.

Mr. Chairman,

Egypt is fully committed to the promotion and protection of human rights and to strengthen international and regional adherence to human rights instruments. We have formally approved to host the Regional Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights in Cairo. We are currently in the stage of finalizing the necessary arrangements with the OHCHR for that matter. We look forward for the office to start its operations soon.

Egypt will continue its efforts to cooperate with its partners in the international community to strengthen international human rights institutions. It also reiterates its commitment towards its people to protect human rights, ensure equal rights for men and women, and consolidate the rule of law and democratic values with the broad participation of all Egyptians.

Thank you.