STATEMENT BY BRAZIL

Item 69 (b): Promotion and Protection of Human Rights

68th United Nations General Assembly
Third Committee

New York, October 30, 2013
Mr. Chair,

My delegation aligns itself with the statements made by Cuba, on behalf of CELAC, and by Venezuela, on behalf of MERCOSUR.

Brazil warmly welcomes the recent designation of South Africa as the facilitator for the consultative process for the proclamation of the International Decade for People of African Descent. We will endeavor all necessary efforts and will work with South Africa, other Member States and partners to approve the long overdue resolution on the International Decade. The proclamation of the Decade by the UN is an important step towards a long and necessary path, which is the broad education of the public, in order to raise awareness against prejudice, intolerance and racism.

Brazil also welcomes the recent decision of the Israeli Government to participate in the UPR exercise. We hope that this move may help advance the peace process negotiations between Israelis and Palestinians.

Mr. Chair,

Allow me to recall that earlier this month, Brazil was honored to host the III Global Conference on Child Labour, in which intergovernmental organizations, civil society and NGOs from over 150 countries were represented. In Brasilia, we took a decisive step towards consolidating the concept of sustained eradication of child labor; and the Brasilia Declaration on Child Labour, adopted by consensus, reaffirmed the overarching goal of the sustained eradication of all child labor, in particular its worst forms by 2016.

The promotion of human rights and the protection of fundamental freedoms are enshrined in Brazil's Constitution and are guiding principles of our foreign policy.

Because they have not always been observed, they are all the more dear to us, and every attempt has been made to broaden their scope and enforcement during the last thirty years of Brazilian democratic consolidation.
It is no small feat that we have acceded to nearly all international human rights treaties and made every effort to meet their standards of compliance.

For a country that comes from a region once plagued by authoritarianism, we look to the UN to further strengthen the protection of all human rights - political, civil, economic, social and cultural - and to help us build international guarantees in areas of renewed interest such as privacy and the freedom of expression.

That is why, Mr. Chair, Brazil is increasingly wary of the mass surveillance of private and official communications. These activities disregard ethical and moral standards of conduct in international relations and represent flagrant violations of national sovereignty, the right to privacy and the right to life.

Mr. Chair,
The world is witnessing profound and accelerated technological transformations that enable individuals to communicate their ideas without the limitations of geographic space and time. More people are able to freely disclose their political convictions and promote their cause, and to start and organize a diversity of movements.

We are of the view that information and communication technologies should serve the primary objectives of enhancing cooperation towards sustainable development and peace.

We note with concern, however, that these technologies can also be used for objectives that undermine the fundamental purposes and principles of the UN.

The recent disclosure of information gathering through massive surveillance programs allegedly used in the fight against terrorism requires the international community to reaffirm its commitment to uphold civil and political liberties.

Lack of reaction and justified indignation may lead us back to a bygone era where police states were ubiquitous and surveillance was used to curb, repress and control.
President Dilma Rousseff stressed at the opening of the General Assembly that illegal interception of communications and data from citizens, businesses and members of governments constitutes a grave violation of human rights and civil liberties, particularly the right to privacy.

In Brazil, the Law of Access to Information was a significant step towards transparency and the protection of citizens. Together with the National Truth Commission, the law has quickly become a key instrument in the fight against human rights violations, past and present. Among its far-reaching provisions, the Law states that documents referring to any form of state-sponsored human rights violations cannot be classified.

We consider that the General Assembly should play a leading role in the discussion of these matters.

As the High Commissioner for Human Rights, Navi Pillay, has recently stated: "while concerns about national security and criminal activity may justify the exceptional and narrowly-tailored use of surveillance programs, surveillance without adequate safeguards to protect the right to privacy actually risks impacting negatively on the enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms".

Mr. Chair,

Drones are a new technology, apparently here to stay. We are at the early stages of dealing with them on moral and ethical grounds.

The international community still has to achieve a consensus on the legality of these machines and their use for the targeted killing of human beings, usually in violation of foreign countries' airspace and sovereignty. The civilian casualties that result from these practices are of utmost concern.
Like unwarranted surveillance, drones are seen by many Governments, representatives of civil society and NGOs as a new means of escaping accountability for hostile military actions while reducing the human and political costs for the perpetrating country.

Drones seem to diminish the threshold of difficulty and doubt in decisions on unilateral interventions in foreign countries.

Contrary to their justification on grounds of security and surveillance, our view is that drones can make the world a less safe place to live in because they are deployed under a mantle of secrecy and unaccountability that can undermine confidence and trust among states.

Their use has recurrently been presented as a technological "fait accompli", to which Brazil strongly objects.

We should avoid a situation in which human life becomes a mere means to a technological end or a collateral effect - it should be the other way around. Technology should be at the service of mankind and, indeed, of human rights.

Mr. Chair,

On a final note, we wish to express our view that the negotiation of country-specific resolutions has been lacking in transparency, and often does not adequately consult with the membership at large.

The international community must work united to promote and protect all human rights in every place where they are being threatened, irrespective of geopolitical interests, culture, ideology or development situations.

Brazil commits to being constructive and to working towards consensus while fully respecting the principles of universality, impartiality and non-selectivity in the work of this Committee. Thank you.