

UN Human Rights Council Organizational Meeting of the 4th Cycle

Statement by the Delegation of the United States Delivered by Charge d'Affaires, a.i., Mark C. Storella. June 19, 2009



*Charge d'Affaires, a.i.,
Mark C. Storella and
Political Officer Mark
Cassayre*

"Mr. President, Madam High Commissioner, Distinguished Delegates,

First, Mr. President and other officers of the bureau, please accept the congratulations of the United States on your election. We look forward to working closely with you. We would also take this opportunity to express our sincere appreciation to Ambassador Martin Umohobhi for the leadership he so consistently demonstrated during his tenure and the sense of decorum he brought to this hall. Sir, you have been a lion; you have inspired us; during tense times you have leavened our work with humor; and you have even kept the Council on schedule. We thank you.

The United States assumes its seat on the Council with gratitude, humility, and in the spirit of cooperation. President Obama recently underscored that spirit, stating: "There must be a sustained effort to listen to each other; to learn from each other; to respect one another; and to seek common ground."

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Mr. President, we hope that this spirit is something shared by all countries, and particularly those elected to serve on this Council. If we are to ensure that together we effectively address the pressing human rights concerns of our time, we must be dedicated to finding and pursuing constructive paths toward our shared goals.

When the United Nations was formed, it sent a powerful and historic message by placing human rights at the very core of its charter. To fully realize the charter's aspirations, all member states must work to ensure that the United Nations offers a credible, balanced and effective forum for advancing human rights.

For our part, the United States hopes to reinforce the ability of this Council to speak with one voice about situations that are an affront to human dignity.

We will also be stalwart in our promotion of universality, transparency, and objectivity and we urge other members to dedicate themselves to these goals as well. We are mindful that adherence to these principles requires that all states be subject to review by this body, including our own.



*Charge d'Affaires, a.i.,
Mark C. Storella and
Ambassador Martin
Ihoeghian Uhomoibhi of
Nigeria, newly elected
President of UN Human
Rights Council*

The United States further commits to continuing to be a strong advocate for all people who suffer from abuse and oppression, and to be a tireless defender of courageous individuals across the globe who work, often at great personal risk, on behalf of the rights of others.

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On this day in 1865, Union soldiers rode into Galveston, Texas to carry the news of the end of the U.S. Civil War and to enforce the Emancipation Proclamation. With their arrival, word finally reached the frontiers of the United States that the war had ended, that slaves were free.

It is a day of celebration and solemn remembrance for Americans. We recognize that it has been a very long and difficult journey from 1865 to 2009; and that journey is not yet complete. However over the course of these years, the promotion and protection of human rights has become an ever-deepening fundamental value in American society. We look forward to sharing our national experience in pursuit of the enduring challenge of achieving these ideals, while also standing in solidarity with all those who promote the advance of human rights around the world.

Thank you, Mr. President."