



Human Rights Council – 9th session

Oral statement on Item 6 by Bahai International Community, the Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies and the International Service for Human Rights

Thursday, 18 September 2008

Mr President and members of the Council,

We would like to take this opportunity to comment on the importance of Item 6 as a standing item of the Human Rights Council.

We regret the attempts of some States to remove any opportunity to discuss developments related to the UPR process and the mechanism as a whole. We therefore welcome that Item 6 was reinstated for the 9th session, and expect that its status as a standing item will be upheld in all future sessions.

Concerning the scope and content of general debate under Item 6, it is our view that in order for the UPR to meet its full potential, all stakeholders should be given opportunities to inform the Council of progress and obstacles in implementing UPR recommendations. The institution-building package clearly recognises that while the State under review has the primary responsibility for implementing the outcome, other relevant stakeholders also have a role to play in this regard.

While paragraph 34 of the institution-building text states that subsequent UPR reviews should focus on implementation of the outcome, this does not preclude the possibility to provide comments related to implementation under the general debate of Item 6, as provided by paragraph 35 of *Resolution 5/1*. We therefore commend those States that have taken advantage of this opportunity, illustrating a commitment to the UPR process and ensuring that substantive discussion is not forcibly reduced to a four-year cycle.

We strongly believe that substantive follow-up to the UPR outcome is critical to the credibility and relevance of the UPR mechanism. Such follow-up cannot be equated to, and should not be mistaken for, a second review. The UPR is an on-going process on

both the institutional and substantive level: It should be continuously improved in terms of its functioning, and it should be kept alive between two cycles as a process aimed at improving the situation on the ground in each country. It should not be forgotten that this is the main objective of the UPR that should continue to guide its work.

Finally, we are encouraged by the statement of Algeria at the Council's organisational meeting that in future consideration of UPR outcomes NGOs should no longer be prevented from freely addressing issues not previously raised in the UPR Working Group. We are hopeful that this reflects a better appreciation of the spirit of the UPR as a mechanism 'with the full involvement of the country concerned' and the effective participation of all relevant stakeholders. This will certainly strengthen the UPR process.

Thank you.