

**JOINT STATEMENT to be delivered under Agenda Item 8
On the new High Commissioner**

**United Nations Human Rights Council
38th session**

Mr. President,

I have the honour to deliver this statement on behalf of a cross-regional group of countries.

The Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action proposed the establishment of the post of High Commissioner, in recognition of the necessity for the United Nations human rights machinery to continually adapt to the current and future needs in the promotion and protection of human rights.

At the beginning of the Council session the current High Commissioner for Human Rights spoke eloquently about his work and his appreciation for the staff of his Office for the crucial work they do in promoting and protecting human rights. In turn we wish to thank High Commissioner Zeid bin Raad Al-Hussein for his great leadership in addressing human rights issues at a global level and the strong dedication to his mandate.

We look forward to the appointment of his successor and to continuing to work in cooperation with the new High Commissioner.

The role of the High Commissioner remains as crucial as ever, and the appointment of the new High Commissioner comes at a critical moment for the United Nations and for the international community. The incoming High Commissioner will likely continue to have to tackle violations of human rights norms as well as fundamental rights and freedoms around the world.

He or she is expected to be a strong advocate for human rights protection; to work with States, the UN system, civil society and other stakeholders on human rights promotion; and to play a key role in preventing human rights violations throughout the world.

In doing so the High Commissioner has to be objective and independent and at the same time capable of building partnerships with all parties, including States, civil society, academics, and business enterprises.

We remain firmly committed to preserving the independence of the High Commissioner and OHCHR, their ability to speak out, and to act in response to violations and abuses of human rights, wherever they occur.

Thank you, Mr. President.