

Charter, the Universal Declaration, the Covenants, and numerous other instruments have created a complex and impressive web of commitment, among all states, to observe these standards. In this Commission and in other appropriate fora, member states call one another to account for their performance of these commitments. And, what is of equal - indeed paramount - importance, our citizens, in whose name and for whose benefit we have incurred these obligations, are entitled to expect no less of us as we pursue our work. To deny this conclusion, in the name of non-interference, is to deny the very legitimacy of this body and all that the United Nations has built in the field of human rights over the past forty years.

My delegation believes that this Commission must look across frontiers and beyond governments, and concentrate on the human rights of individual persons and groups in all states. When these rights appear to be violated, the Commission must determine the facts objectively and, if warranted, speak clearly and strongly against any violations. In doing so, the Commission, must, of course, show due respect for the state concerned, and must be conscious of the need to persuade governments to improve the situation. The strongest condemnation may not always serve to encourage change. At the same time, however, the Commission must be even handed regardless of systems of government or geographic location. Neither political system nor location excuse any state from these universal obligations.

Unfortunately, Mr. Chairman, there is no shortage of incidents which, on the basis of these standards of objectivity, demand the attention of this Commission. Cries of anguish are no longer muffled by distance. The silicon chip and satellite communications technology telescope sounds and scenes across vast distances, and boundaries arbitrarily drawn on maps are not able to resist the transmission of truth. The institutions of the United Nations must evolve to meet the challenge posed by human rights violations in the modern day. My delegation is convinced that a High Commissioner for Human Rights will be a central element of our ultimate response.

The Commission has in recent years developed a most effective means of taking up those situations which it considers deserving of urgent attention. I refer here to the system of special rapporteurs and representatives