

**Mr. President,
Mrs. High Commissioner for Human Rights,
Excellencies**

First of all let me congratulate you Mr. President for the manner that you have conducted the work of this Council. We have confidence on your experience and diplomatic ability to conduct the difficult task, to establish the foundations of this important organ of the United Nations.

The establishment of the Human Rights Council was one of the most important successes of the United Nations lately, not only for contributing to the improvement of its structure, charged to promote and protect the Human Rights in the world, but fundamentally of being susceptible to change the environment of confrontation between governments, that characterized the former Human Rights Commission, giving place to a forum of dialogue and cooperation.

The balance of this first year of the Council mandate nevertheless positive, demonstrates that, without better realism, the objectives that made the creation of this organ could be compromised. Still the tendency to politicize its deliberations and decisions, and the use of two heights and two measures. The lack of understanding about the main issues to be analyzed by this Council continue to be an obstacle for the elaboration of an agenda based on consensus. The mandates holders continue to act without a code of conduct, what allows that some exceed their competences and making it difficult to be accountable.

Those are some of the areas in witch the intergovernmental working group and the President of the Council should particularly continue to give their special attention in order to confer the necessary credibility to this Council.

Mr. President,

The Human Rights situation in the world, nevertheless volatile in some regions, has in general improved substantially. Africa made important progresses in this domain, following the end of internal conflicts in some countries, the democratization of others and the consequent establishment of the political, economic, social and juridical conditions necessary to promote and protect the human rights.

Angola was not an exception. The end of the internal conflict, at the time the biggest obstacle to the better exercise and guarantee of the liberties and rights of citizens, allowed the government to dedicate more attention to this area, alongside the efforts of pacification, reconciliation and national reconstruction.

The commitment of my government to promote and protect human rights is unconditional. Our vocation of respect and consideration above all of the dignity of the human being has its greater example in the way we managed the process that led to the effective cessation of the hostilities in all national territory.

Due to this attitude we have been very successful on the edification of a free country, united, reconciled and respecting the differences, without retaliation or resentment, under the ruins of a country before divided by the hatred between brothers and violence.

Our goal is the edification of a prosper society, with social justice and democracy. The Angolan democracy, nevertheless young and with natural deficiencies became a one-way rote.

We are confident that the consolidation of our democracy is strictly related with security, development and respect of human rights. On this domain, we know that some more has to be done. However, when we look back to what was done until now, it makes us believe that we are in the right direction.

In the constitutional domain, my government created in 1997 the Office of Human Rights, affected to the Ministry of Justice, as an organ to promote the human rights in all country; to guide the citizens on ways to go in case of violation of their rights; and to form civil society activists, police and armed forces. This Office functions in closed partnership with NGOs and the United Nations.

At provincial level, the human rights bureaus are integrated by the local responsible of the Ministry of Justice, by judges, procurators, local police chief, representatives of the national children institute, local ONGs representatives, churches, traditional authorities and representatives of political parties.

This heterogenic composition assures its functioning on an exempt and transparent manner and it proves the space that is given in Angola to the defenders of human rights.

The access of citizens to justice has also being improved, due to the rehabilitation of infrastructures related to justice, destroyed by the conflict; the capacitation and training of staff (judges and official of justice): and the improvement of the sponsorship and juridical assistance. The Ministry of Justice guarants the right to defend the interests and property of financially disadvantaged citizens.

Related to legislative maters, the Constitutional Law of the Republic of Angola consecrates articles on the fundamental rights and obligations of citizens, inspired on the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Pact on Civil and Political Rights as well as other relevant international juridical instruments. Despite the vicious cycle of violence that characterized the last years of its history, Angola belongs to the group of countries that abolished the death penalty.

One of the first legislative measures adopted by my Government was the establishment in 1998 of a Action Plan to the juridical protection of children and the juvenal justice. Recently we created the Judge of Minors that takes care of all issues related to minors and the Juvenal justice, children at risk or in conflict with the Law.

Regarding the freedom of expression and information, recently it was reinforced by the approbation of a new law of the press, elaborated with the collaboration of journalists themselves and the civil society. The right to association and freedom of religion has grown lately judging by the growing numbers of NGOs, associations and churches registered regularly in Angola.

Mr. President,

In order to better guarantee the rights and individual and collective freedom of citizens, my Government introduced profound reforms on the judicial system, eliminated some special jurisdiction and created a unified system of justice.

In 1996, we created the Court of Accounts, organ devoted to control the public money and to secure more rigor and discipline of the public finances.

We believe that the actual process of reform of the justice and law in Angola which legislation will soon be submitted to the competent organs to be approved, will help to consolidate the legal picture for a better administration of justice in Angola and consequently, improve the guaranties of the rights and liberties of our people.

On this regard Mr. President, the Angolan institutions proved to have mechanisms and guaranties to solve eventual violations of the rights and liberties of individuals or collectivities on its territory.

To finish a would like to thank the work developed by the Office of the High Commissioner of the United Nations for Human Rights in Angola regarding technical assistance and institutional capacity. This support will be needed in order to complement the efforts of my Government in the area of promotion and protection of human rights.

Thank you.