

3 March 2014

**Statement of H.E. Ambassador John W. Ashe
President of the 68th Session of the United Nations General Assembly,
at the twenty-fifth regular session of the Human Rights Council**

The President of the United Nations General Assembly, John W. Ashe, made his first official visit to the United Nations Office in Geneva on Monday, where he addressed the opening of the Twenty-fifth regular session of the Human Rights Council. In his remarks, the President thanked the Council for "reminding Member States that the Universal Declaration of Human Rights must be applied in totality and not selectively" and recognized its achievements in continuing to "shine a spotlight on persistent and pressing human rights violations and abuses afflicting our world and its people."

President Ashe welcomed the conclusion of the first cycle of the Universal Periodic Review, a mechanism that has enabled the review of the human rights records of the entire UN membership. As the Council presently initiates the second cycle, President Ashe encouraged cooperation with this important instrument.

He further commended Member States on the recent conclusion of the intergovernmental negotiations on strengthening and enhancing the effective functioning of the human rights treaty body system, expressing his confidence that this would facilitate Member States' adherence to their respective reporting obligations.

The President of the 68th session of the UN General Assembly also drew the Council's attention to his agenda to 'set the stage' for the Post-2015 Development Agenda and highlighted the mutually reinforcing work of the General Assembly and the Council. Recognizing that, "we remain challenged to address rising inequality," while underscoring that, "there can be no true development unless all people have access to equal human rights, democracy, dignity, and freedom."

Finally, President Ashe participated in the High-level Segment of the Conference on Disarmament and held bilateral meetings with the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Paraguay, H.E. Mr. Eladio Loizaga Caballero; the President of the Human Rights Council, H.E. Mr. Baudelaire Ndong Ella; and the Acting Director General of the UN Office at Geneva, serving also as the Acting Secretary-General of the Conference on Disarmament, Mr. Michael Møller. The General Assembly President concluded his visit with remarks at the opening of the exhibition "Wild and Precious" to celebrate the first ever United Nations World Wildlife Day.