

2 March 2015

**Statement of H.E. Mr. Sam Kahamba Kutesa,  
President of the 69<sup>th</sup> Session of the General Assembly,  
at the Opening of the 28<sup>th</sup> Regular Session of the Human Rights  
Council**

**Mr President, Excellency Joachim Rueker,  
Excellencies,  
Distinguished Delegates,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

As you open the 28th regular session of the Human Rights Council, I am pleased to deliver to you, this video message.

Every person is entitled to a life of dignity and the full enjoyment of human rights and freedoms. Protecting and promoting these basic rights represents a fundamental pillar of the work done at the United Nations. Given the Council's role as the principal subsidiary organ of the General Assembly dealing with human rights, I attach great importance to its work.

Through its various mandates and mechanisms, the Council has actively addressed the full spectrum of human rights – civil, political, economic, social, and cultural rights, as well as the right to development. It has also been engaged with country-specific human rights violations.

Protecting and promoting the rights of those in vulnerable situations forms an integral part of the Council's agenda. From the rights of women and children to persons with disabilities; from migrant workers to internally displaced persons; to victims of sexual violence and armed conflict; the Council has worked tirelessly to strengthen the fundamental rights of all people.

In this context, the Human Rights Council deserves our collective support to continue delivering on this very important mandate.

**Excellencies,**

All human life is sacrosanct. Any abuses carried out anywhere must not only be unequivocally condemned, but mechanisms must be put in place to stop such abuses and afford redress to the victims. But in playing its pivotal role, the work of the Council must never be applied in a manner that is deemed to be unbalanced or leading to inequalities.

By responding to persistent and urgent human rights violations around the world and by assisting Member States in improving their human rights records, the Human Rights Council remains at the core of ensuring the dignified existence of the human race.

Member States bear the primary responsibility to protect their citizens and provide them with internationally agreed upon human rights. It is essential that the Council takes this fact into account when deliberating courses of action when dealing with human rights challenges.

In this context, I would like to stress the importance of the Universal Periodic Review mechanism, and encourage Member States to provide their full cooperation in the spirit of its universality.

### **Esteemed Colleagues,**

In recent times around the world, we have witnessed an unsettling rise in many forms of intolerance, discrimination and prejudice. These behaviours have culminated in a wide range of negative outcomes; including, stereotyping, stigmatization, exclusion, threats and even extreme violence.

We must condemn, without reservation, all manifestations of intolerance; including, anti-Semitism, islamophobia, racism and all other forms of prejudice, incitement, harassment or violence against persons or communities based on race, ethnic origin or religious belief.

It is essential that the Council and all stakeholders are actively involved in efforts to fight against prejudice, while also promoting and strengthening tolerance, mutual understanding, dialogue and respect.

### **Ladies and Gentlemen,**

The Council has done commendable work to improve the human rights situation globally, especially with regard to civil and political rights. However, it needs to give greater focus to social and economic rights and in particular, the right to development, as these are pivotal to the attainment of an acceptable standard of living in the most economically challenged parts of the world.

As we formulate a new, transformative development framework this year at the United Nations, we must bear in mind the inextricable link between development and human rights.

Among other objectives, the future agenda should promote peace and security, democratic governance, the rule of law, gender equality and human rights for all. Civil society and NGO participation in these processes is of vital importance.

To that end, I will convene a series of inclusive high-level thematic debates over the coming months, several of which will seek to address these issues, while also contributing to the formulation of an inclusive and ambitious post-2015 development agenda.

I thank you for your kind attention.