



7th session of the Human Rights Council

Statement delivered by Kumi Naidoo¹

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Human rights: interconnected in an unjust world

Mr. President, Madam High Commissioner, representatives of governments and civil society,

Every day 50 000 men, women and children die from preventable causes due to the fact that we are not able to uphold the social and economic rights of a large number of the world's peoples. This unnecessary loss of human life constitutes a daily silent tsunami or a passive genocide.

As Mahatma Gandhi put it, "this planet has enough to meet all of humanity's need but not all of humanity's greed". The growing inequality within virtually every nation on earth as well as between developing and developed countries is growing at an alarming and unsustainable pace, prompting some to say that we must now address the reality of global economic apartheid.

This year, just over half way to the deadline of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in 2015 is the time to redouble our efforts. The Human Rights Council must be a strong voice in ensuring that we move beyond the rhetoric of economic, social and cultural rights and make them real for the world's most marginalised peoples.

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As the campaign recently launched by *The Elders*, which includes human rights champions such as Nelson Mandela and Mary Robinson says – “Every Human Has Rights”. And I would add, every one of us here has responsibilities to work to fulfil these rights.

To achieve the aims we have set ourselves, we must harness *everything* at our disposal. This means opening space for all actors within society to contribute – if civil society is to offer an independent voice, it must enjoy the right to act without undue hindrance. This means not following the example of the thirty or so countries that have recently introduced or passed laws that restrict civil society. This means that we have to address the devastating effect the so-called “war on terror” is having on the freedom of association, assembly and expression; as well as the legitimising of torture, detention without trial and the undermining of the rule of law.

In the coming weeks, let us be guided by the words of Mahatma Gandhi who said: “Recall the face of the poorest and weakest [person] you have seen, and ask yourself if the step you contemplate is going to be of any use to him [or her].” Let this be our guide and may the 7th session of the Human Rights Council ensure that by the 60th birthday of the UDHR this year we truly have something to celebrate.

Warm regards,

Kumi Naidoo, CIVICUS Secretary General