

PERMANENT MISSION OF INDIA, GENEVA

HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL 13th SESSION (1-26 March 2010)

AGENDA ITEM 2: General Debate on HC/SG Thematic Reports (5th March 2010)

Statement by India

Mr. President,

We thank the High Commissioner, Ms. Navanethem Pillay, for her Report on the composition of the staff of OHCHR that follows from the Council resolution 10/5. We thank her also for the interim responses that she gave during the interactive dialogue yesterday.

02. We appreciate the efforts of the High Commissioner to improve geographical diversity in OHCHR and are encouraged to note that this issue remains one of the High Commissioner's priorities. We take positive note of the gender balance and the outcome of the national competitive examination held in February 2008. Nevertheless, Mr. President, we would like to air the following concerns:

a) One, we remain deeply concerned that even six years after Recommendation 8 of the JIU report 2003/6, the OHCHR still does not have any specific targets and deadlines to reduce the imbalance in geographical distribution of staff. This was acknowledged in paragraph 13 of the last JIU report 2009/2. As we had stated at the last session, we disagree with the assertion in the JIU Report that "the efforts made by the current High Commissioner and OHCHR should be recognized by the Council as complying with the JIU recommendations on improving geographical diversity". To this end, we would request the High Commissioner to share information about her plans to formulate specific targets and deadlines on this question;

b) Two, the data table on page 4 of the Report, showing some apparent improvement in geographical diversity over the last three years, needs to be interpreted with caution and circumspection. For, the improvement seems to have been achieved as a result of the overall expansion of the OHCHR staff size – something that obviously would not continue to occur elastically and, in the absence of specific targets and deadlines, bound to hit a limit. We would, therefore, request the High Commissioner to share information on how she plans to sustain the process;

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c) Three, the Report omits to discuss the issue of the highly skewed trend in the recruitment of Associate Experts or Junior Professional Officers (JPOs) – an issue that had been examined in the latest JIU report. We would, therefore, request the High Commissioner to share information on how she plans to address this issue;

d) Four, in keeping with the spirit of Section VII of General Assembly resolution 63/250, and while awaiting the JIU report on the need to enhance the mobility of the OHCHR staff, we would request the High Commissioner to share her views in the matter;

e) Five, Mr. President, the Report is incorrect in asserting in paragraph 12 that the General Assembly had decided, vide its resolution 63/250, “not to include references to regions in reporting on staff representation”. The correct interpretation would be to say that the resolution only emphasizes that the system of geographical ranges is designed to apply to countries rather than to regions or groups. It does not, in any way, bar any references to regions in reporting on staff representation.

03. Finally, Mr. President, we would like to reiterate that while we recognize and value the need to maintain competence, efficiency and integrity of the OHCHR, these attributes cannot be presumed to be limited to a single geographical region.

Thank you, Mr. President.
