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## **Global economic crisis exposed human rights violations, says top UN official**



High Commissioner for Human Rights Navi Pillay

1 March 2010 – The top United Nations human rights official said today that the economic and financial crises have exposed existing violations and increased the number of victims of abuse and hardship.

“The financial and economic downturns – together with food shortages, climate-related catastrophes and continuing violence – have shattered complacent or over-optimistic notions of expanding security, prosperity, safety and the enjoyment of freedoms by all,” High Commissioner for Human Rights Navi Pillay said in her opening **statement** to the 13th session of the Human Rights Council, which runs until 26 March

She recalled that she addressed the Council for the first time last year against the background of worsening financial and economic crises.

“These sudden and cascading upheavals exposed and exacerbated existing violations of human rights. They also widened the areas and increased the number of victims of abuse and hardship,” she noted.

The UN General Assembly created the Council in 2006 with the main purpose of addressing situations of human rights violations and make recommendations on them.

“To counter deeply rooted and chronic human rights conditions in many countries, such as repression, discrimination, and strife, as well as rapidly unfolding man-made and natural

challenges to human welfare, such as those we have recently experienced, five years ago the United Nations initiated a process of reform that proposed several innovations, including the creation of the Human Rights Council,” said Ms. Pillay.

“This new institution was conceived as a forum where responses to inequality, repression, and impunity could be crafted and advocated to help build a world in larger freedom,” she told the 70 dignitaries in Geneva for the 1 to 3 March high-level segment.

“The review of the Council, now forthcoming, would help the international community to assess whether the fundamental principles of this body’s mandate had been solidly and consistently upheld,” she added.

Ms. Pillay praised the Council’s accomplishments thus far, including the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) which involves a review of the human rights records of all 192 UN Member States once every four years.

Despite its accomplishments, the High Commissioner noted areas of improvement for the Council, including improved coordination among various human rights mechanisms and the Council’s ability to influence policy change in human rights situations.

“No matter how well intentioned, determined, and incisive the Council’s action is, this body cannot by itself or through remote control, change realities on the ground. Producing this change is, primarily, the responsibility of States which need to act in partnership with civil society and national protection systems,” she said.

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