



## **Republic of Serbia**

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*Item 6 - Universal Periodic Review*

**Statement by**

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State Secretary  
Ministry of Human and Minority Rights of the Republic of Serbia**

Geneva, March 19, 2009

Mr. Chairman,

Honourable Members of the Council,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am glad and honoured to be able to present today the Reply of the Republic of Serbia concerning Conclusions and Recommendations from the Draft Report of the United Nations Human Rights Council Working Group for the Universal Periodic Review process in our country of December 5, 2008.

It is my pleasure to inform you that the Republic of Serbia, upon careful consideration of the mentioned Draft Report, accepted most of the conclusions and recommendations in whole or in part. Detailed explanation of our Government's stand has been provided regarding all the recommendations.

Aware of its responsibility to promote and protect human rights and fundamental freedoms, the Republic of Serbia is ready and willing to implement the accepted recommendations and responsibilities, although implementation efforts often face pressing challenges, and sometimes increase of public expenditure.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I would like to highlight on this occasion that the Republic of Serbia has already begun, in the short period from the interactive dialogue till the adoption of the Final Report, to fulfill certain obligations. Namely, preparations for ratification of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and its Optional Protocol are well underway, as well as development of the Initial Report on applying of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination. Furthermore, the Government of the Republic of Serbia elaborated Draft Law on Prohibiting Discrimination; also, National Strategy for Improvement of the Status of Women and Gender Equality was adopted.

Due to the time limit I will go through some of the recommendations that we accepted, while detailed explanation is offered through the document submitted to the Council.

The recommendation regarding the adoption of a separate anti-discrimination law is accepted. The recommendations for the advancement of the position of persons with disabilities are accepted. In 2006, the Government of the Republic of Serbia adopted the National Strategy for the Advancement of the Position of Persons with Disabilities. The same year the Law on the Prevention of Discrimination of Persons with Disabilities was adopted, while the Law on the Employment and Professional Rehabilitation of Persons with Disabilities will be adopted soon. Recommendations regarding state's commitment to human rights protection and raising public awareness regarding human rights are accepted. Ministry for Human and Minority Rights signed a Memorandum of Cooperation with the NGOs, by which both sides obliged themselves to ensure regular future exchange of information on activities connected with the preparation, adoption and implementation of laws and strategies in the area of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, in connection with the production of reports on the implementation of accepted

international obligations, as well as in connection with other activities falling under the competency of the Ministry. In the future, the Ministry of Education will also take part in raising consciousness on the possibilities of using existing legal provisions and institutional mechanisms for the protection of human rights. The Republic of Serbia shall continue to undertake all necessary measures of strengthening national mechanisms for the implementation of the views of contracting bodies in connection with individual applications/petitions. The recommendation regarding the Report on the Implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Racial Discrimination is accepted, as the Ministry for Human and Minority Rights has already began to prepare the initial report on the implementation of the Convention. The Republic of Serbia accepted recommendations regarding the role of women in high-level decision-making process. The Republic of Serbia is undertaking activities toward changing the Family Law by introducing norms that clearly prohibit corporal punishment and protect children from all forms of physical punishment, including physical punishment in the family environment, therefore we accepted recommendations regarding prohibition of corporal punishment, including in the family, in line with the recent recommendation of the Committee on the Rights of the Child. Recommendations regarding implementation of a comprehensive national strategy to prevent trafficking and sexual exploitation of children and to take effective measures to combat trafficking in women and children in cooperation with countries in the trafficking network are accepted. To continue to develop a legal system in line with international standards, in order to strengthen the rule of law is accepted. Recommendations regarding necessary measures in order to ensure that allegations of human rights violations are systematically subjected to inquiries and punished where appropriate are accepted as well as to strengthen measures for the development of effective mechanisms to help combat impunity, including strengthening of the judiciary. The recommendations to ensure investigations of cases of violence against journalists and for creating a climate in which journalists will be able to freely report on sensitive issues are accepted. The recommendation to undertake measures to improve socio-economic conditions for refugees and internally displaced persons is accepted as well as to reach the human rights goals set by the Council in its resolution 9/12.

Mr. Chairman,

The Republic of Serbia supports the work of the Human Rights Council and the Universal Periodic Review process based on interactive dialogue, which promotes universal human rights and their interconnection and contributes to the best practices exchange among states and other interested parties. In such context, please allow me to express on behalf of our Government, heartfelt gratitude to all states that have recognized fields which enable more efficient action for improvement of human rights in our country, as well as representatives of the group of three: Ghana, Pakistan and Ukraine and their contribution to the preparation of this report. I would also like to thank to numerous NGOs and relevant United Nations bodies that have contributed during the Universal Periodic Review process to determining status of human rights in our country.

Finally, I would like to point out that the Republic of Serbia believes that the next cycle of the Universal Periodic Review process to be carried out in four years' time will be a real test that will show the extent of fulfillment of commitments undertaken by our country in this process for improvement of the status of human rights and freedoms in our society.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.