Address by H.E. Joachim Rücker  
President of the Human Rights Council

28th Session International Coordinating Committee of National Institutions for Promotion and Protection of Human Rights (ICC)

High Commissioner,
Mister Chairperson of the International Coordinating Committee,  
Mister Assistant Secretary-General,  
Distinguished Representatives of National Human Rights Institutions,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is an honour and privilege for me to attend the 28th Annual Meeting of the ICC as President of the Human Rights Council.

At the outset, let me first compliment the International Coordinating Committee for its dedicated and unwavering commitment to promote the role of NHRIs. NHRIs are key players in human rights at both, the national and international level, and we in the Council have benefitted tremendously from both the ICCs and the NHRIs engagement.

I would also like to thank Mr. Mabedle Lourance Mshwana for his determined leadership of the ICC. Yours and your staff’s commitment, Mister Chairperson, has substantially contributed to the continued success of the ICC in raising awareness of the work of NHRIs, in providing further visibility to NHRIs in Geneva and in establishing an excellent cooperation with the Human Rights Council. The role of the ICC in Geneva is highly valued and I can only encourage NHRIs to make best use of this unique platform.

Turning to the role of NHRIs, it is often said that NHRIs serve as a bridge between the international and national level; that they link governments and civil society. Looking at the interaction between NHRIs and the Human Rights Council, NHRIs can indeed help to translate our work at the Council into real action. NHRIs support us not only by being a unique source of information,
ensuring that we have a better understanding of national human rights situations but also – and primarily – by taking our work from Room XX back home. They help us to make our work public, to create domestic space for our discussions, to contribute to translating our recommendations into policies at the national level. All in all, NHRIs contribute to both, the strengthening of human rights at the national and international level. And for me, as President of the Human Rights Council, it is therefore only logical to see that the Human Rights Council continues to call for an active role of NHRIs in its work.

Mesdames, messieurs,


L'engagement et la participation active des soixante-dix institutions nationales de statut A et des trente-cinq institutions de statut B et C enrichissent les discussions, les débats annuels et les dialogues interactives. De surcroît, les institutions nationales constituent un point d'appui solide dans le cadre des titulaires des mandats thématiques et de l'Examen Périodique Universel. En tout, les institutions nationales apportent une contribution substantielle au travail du Conseil en tant que source d'information indépendante et crédible.

Le Conseil a accordé un rôle encore plus important aux institutions nationales, ce qui a considérablement avancé l'engagement et la participation de ces institutions, en renforçant leurs droits de participation par la résolution 16/21, particulièrement en offrant l'option à soumettre des messages vidéo depuis 2011.
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Given that the Human Rights Council has and is benefiting so much from the engagement of NHRIs, I am very much looking forward to the report of the Secretary-General to the General Assembly this fall on the independent participation of NHRIs, compliant with the Paris Principles, in the work of the Assembly and related processes. I believe, and not only because Germany presented the resolution asking for this report, that the General Assembly would also benefit tremendously from the NHRIs and the ICCs engagement.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

An area of great concern to me and the Council are, however, continuous reports of reprisals against NHRIs. We cannot repeat it often enough: Reprisals are unacceptable.

NHRIs and their respective members and staff should not face any form of reprisal or intimidation, including political pressure, physical intimidation, harassment or unjustifiable budgetary limitations, as a result of activities undertaken in accordance with their respective mandates, including when taking up individual cases or when reporting on serious or systematic violations in their countries.

At the same time, I thank NHRIs for their role in preventing and addressing cases of reprisal against individuals and groups who cooperate with the United Nations and its mechanisms in the field of human rights - as recognised by HRC Resolution 27/28 and General Assembly Resolution 68/171.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Considering that the core idea behind NHRIs is that Human Rights cannot be fully achieved solely through legislative and administrative work, but that it needs NHRIs assistance, I encourage all States who have not yet done so to establish independent and pluralistic NHRIs, in accordance with the Paris
Principles, as a way of proactively contributing to human rights protection both within their countries as well as internationally.

Let me take this opportunity to also pay tribute to the important work of the Office of the High Commissioner, which assists the development of independent and effective NHRIs and facilitates the engagement of NHRIs as well as of the ICC with the Human Rights Council and its Mechanisms.

I would also like to encourage the further cooperation between NHRIs and human rights defenders.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Before closing, I wanted to use the opportunity to much welcome that this year’s meeting of the ICC is focusing on the topic of the Post 2015 Development Agenda. In 2005, at the World Summit, we acknowledged that peace and security, development and human rights are the three pillars of the United Nations, which are mutually reinforcing and interlinked. There will not be sustainable development without human rights, and there won’t be the realization of human rights without sustainable development.

While this may seem apparent to all of us, in reality, we are still suffering from our “block” thinking. If we, however, truly strive for universality of human rights, we must start to allow common thinking and start to create synergies, where possible and where necessary. NHRIs can advocate a greater understanding, awareness and respect for interdependencies of human rights.

I therefore strongly encourage the ICC and individual NHRIs to continue their work on building these synergies between human rights and development. The experience of NHRIs in contributing to the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals can be very useful in this regard.
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Let us together continue to ensure that the Human Rights Council provides a platform for NHRIs to bring to the fore of the international community the core human rights issues prevailing at the national level and to contribute to the development of international human rights norms as well as other initiatives aimed at promoting and protecting human rights worldwide.

The more NHRIs and the ICC work with the Council, the more fruitful our work will be, the more effective it will be.

Let me wish you every success in your deliberations.

Thank you for your attention.