

Madam Vice President,

Alsalam Foundation, together with Americans for Democracy & Human Rights in Bahrain (ADHRB), the Bahrain Institute for Rights and Democracy (BIRD), and the Bahrain Center for Human Rights (BCHR), would like to call to the Council's attention areas of human rights deficiencies that would benefit from technical assistance and capacity building in coordination with the Office of the High Commissioner. Specifically, we would like to encourage the Kingdom of Bahrain to enhance cooperation with OHCHR by establishing a country office in the Kingdom.

At the 26th Session of the Human Rights Council, 47 States signed a joint statement expressing their serious concern over a litany of ongoing human rights abuses in Bahrain. These abuses include: the use of torture and ill-treatment; the increases in long sentences for exercising rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and the lack of sufficient guarantee of fair trial; the repression of demonstrations; and, the continued harassment and imprisonment of persons exercising their rights to freedom of opinion and expression, including human rights defenders and journalists.

The statement also called on the Government of Bahrain to release prisoners held in relation to their human rights, and to invite OHCHR to establish a full mandate country office in Bahrain.

In the months since that statement, we have seen few constructive steps taken by Bahrain to address these ongoing abuses. Despite the committed efforts of OHCHR, the Bahraini government has prolonged negotiations for the establishment of a country office in the Kingdom.

With this ongoing process in mind, we join the 47 States in supporting OHCHR's continuing negotiations with Bahrain. We agree that certain concrete steps by the government are essential in creating an environment in which an OHCHR mission can succeed. Such concrete steps should include releasing political prisoners and relaxing laws that unduly restrict civil society, free assembly and expression. We would also like to reiterate that any OHCHR mission in the country should include both a monitoring, as well as a capacity-building mandate.

Thank you.