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**Joint speech on the 25 years anniversary of the Legal and Human Rights
Center**

25th September 2020

by H.E Anders Sjöberg Ambassador of Sweden

*The guest of honour - Chairperson of the Commission for Human Rights and
Good Governance, Judge Mathew Mwaimu,*

Chairperson of the LHRC Board of Directors, Judge Barnabas Samatta,

Minister...,

Representatives from various missions accredited to Tanzania,

Distinguished delegates,

Ladies and gentlemen

It is a great honour for me to address you today on behalf of three
development partners to Legal and Human Rights Centre, LHRC - namely the
embassies of Ireland, Norway and Sweden.

LHRC is today celebrating its 25 years.

25 years of devoted, tireless and brave service for *haki (justice) and uhuru
(freedom) for Tanzania.*

And for us, who have followed and supported the work of LHRC for almost as long, we can with certainty say, that LHRC is not just turning 25, but has - very evidently – proven to be a greatly respected organisation with high levels of credibility, knowledge, courage, and integrity.

This reputation has not just been earned nationally, but also regionally and internationally. As LHRC's development partners, we are immensely proud of supporting the organization's efforts and vision.

LHRC's work

Tanzania has *uhuru* as a guiding principle and it should come as no surprise that Tanzania has also ratified most of the interdependent international conventions on human rights, as well as the regional treaties such as the African Charter on Human and Peoples Rights and the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child.

For 25 years LHRC has supported and promoted Tanzania's respect for human rights, not least through addressing citizens' complaints within the spheres of social justice, environmental justice, as well as in relation to civil liberties and political rights. Coincidentally, it is sad that as LHRC is celebrating its 25 years anniversary, Mr. Tito Magoti – a member of staff - together with his friend, Mr. Theo Giyani, are still in remand prison, for about nine months now, awaiting a fair trial - and we call for due and timely process to be upheld.

As a leading human rights organisation in the country, LHRC, through its committed staff, plays a very important role, which is reflected in the organization's broad mandate. To promote, and safeguard human rights is an enormous task since the human rights are indivisible, interrelated, and interdependent *and* because of the potential backlash that this noble endeavour is likely to provoke.

Some of LHRC's significant contributions, over the last 25 years, include strengthening of civic competence and promoting democracy in Tanzania - through activities such as election observation, strategic litigation, policy advice and expanding access to justice for poor and marginalized individuals. LHRC's human rights report, which is released every year, has become the main reference on the state of Human Rights in Tanzania.

Civil society plays an important role in democratic processes. As core donors, having followed the eminent work of LHRC and other civil society organisations for many years, we note with regret that they have been facing challenges to fulfil their mandate because of legal restrictions, compliance burdens and non-approval of their accreditation.

Democracy and Human Rights

LHRC was founded in 1995, only three years after the Tanzanian Government re-adopted multiparty democracy. Democracy is a system of government where power is vested in the people. For a democracy to function well, it requires informed and engaged citizens – prepared to fulfil their role and assume their democratic responsibilities.

LHRC has been working tirelessly - to empower the people of Tanzania as rights holders and ensure that government assumes its responsibility as the duty bearer. LHRC has *indeed* become a vital part of the democratic fabric of Tanzania.

Excellencies, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen

The commemoration of 25 years of LHRC coincides with Tanzania's general election.

Uhuru and human rights are closely interlinked with the democratic principles of participation, transparency and openness. Without these, without *haki*, there can be no *Uhuru*. Free, fair and transparent elections constitute the foundation of these principles. Independent election observation is a key mechanism for validating the legitimacy and promoting the credibility of the electoral process.

That is why, as core development partners, we commend the Government of Tanzania for accrediting a wide variety of Tanzanian organisations to take on this task. At the same time, we noted with surprise that several of the major organisations with a long-proven track record in election observation, including LHRC, were not accredited. Accreditation of the large and most experienced organizations would have strengthened the capacity and competence of the election observation group as a whole and the credibility of the group's assessment.

Excellencies, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen

We also note with concern that the Tanzania Human Rights Defenders Coalition, an offspring of LHRC, has had their bank accounts frozen for six months. We hope that this situation can be resolved as soon as possible, to allow them to continue with their service to human rights defenders, and the general public of Tanzania.

On this anniversary day, we – Ireland, Norway and Sweden - the core donors, praise the important work of LHRC. We are here to reaffirm our determination and full support to LHRC in her commitment and mandate to promote and protect human rights, as it seeks to contribute to a peaceful, prosperous and democratic Tanzania. Our cooperation is anchored to shared values and commitment to EU's development cooperation principles.

Hongereni kwa kutimiza miaka 25! (Congratulations for marking 25 years)

Asante Sana kwa kunisikiliza