

NGOs make urgent appeal to UN member states to back Human Rights Council resolution

9 March, 2006

We [undersigned NGOs] believe that the draft resolution to establish a Human Rights Council presented by the President of the General Assembly is a sound basis to strengthen the UN's human rights machinery. World leaders pledged to do this when they met at the September 2005 World Summit. We call on all states to join the consensus that has emerged in countries from all regions of the world and to adopt the draft resolution.

The proposed Human Rights Council will be better equipped than the existing Commission on Human Rights to address urgent, serious and long-running human rights situations wherever they occur. It will hold more frequent meetings throughout the year instead of only one. More competitive election procedures will encourage a membership that is more dedicated to the protection of human rights. Instead of slates being adopted by acclamation, members must be elected individually and a higher threshold of votes applies - at least 96 individual votes out of 191 members. A country's human rights record will be taken into account by those voting and those committing gross violations of human rights can be suspended from the body. All members must fully cooperate with the Council and they will undergo a review of their human rights record through a new universal review system that will apply to all countries.

This is an historic opportunity to create a better human rights protection system within the United Nations.

*We call on all members of the United Nations to ensure that the draft resolution is adopted by consensus in the General Assembly.

*No country should call for a vote or propose amendments. To do so will seriously jeopardize this sound and carefully balanced agreement that we have before us.

It is now time to move forward together to ensure that the new Human Rights Council is implemented in the spirit of reform — that governments which are seriously committed to human rights should be elected to this body to make it strong and effective.

ActionAid International, Richard Miller, Director of ActionAid UK

African Centre for Democracy and Human Rights Studies Hannah Forster, Executive Director,

Amnesty International, Irene Khan, Secretary General

Association for the Protection of the Victim (APAV), João Lázaro

ARC International, John Fisher, Co-Director

Asian Forum for Human Rights and Development (FORUM-ASIA), Anselmo Lee, Executive Director

Association for the Cooperation between Peoples (ACEP), Maria de Fátima Sangreman Proença

Association for Cooperation and Development (SUL), Rui Sá Pinto Correia

Casa Alianza Honduras, José Manuel Capellán, National Director

Center "Demos" (Moscow, Russia), Tanya Lokshina

Center For Democracy (Morocco), Dr. Ahmed Jazouli, President

Center for Development of International Law, Lene Schumacher, Director of Programs

Center for Women's Global Leadership, Charlotte Bunch

Childline South Africa, Joan van Niekerk, National Coordinator

Citizens for Global Solutions, Don Kraus, Executive Vice President

CIVICUS: World Alliance for Citizen Participation, Vincente Garcia- Delgado, UN Representative

Civil Rights Movement of Sri Lanka, Suriya Wickremasinghe, Secretary

Comissão Teotônio Vilela, Gorete Marques, Secretária Executiva (Brazil)

Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative, Maja Daruwala, Director.

Conectas Direitos Humanos (Brazil), Lucia Nader, International Relations Coordinator

Conference of NGOs (CONGO), Renate Bloem, President

Congregation of the Sisters of St. Joseph of Peace, Katherine R. Parisi, CSJP-Associate Justice & Peace Coordinator

Coordinadora Nacional de Derechos Humanos- Peru, Francisco Soberon, Executive Secretary

Democracy Coalition Project, Ted Piccone, Executive Director

Dominicans for Justice and Peace Geneva, Philippe LeBlanc, Director

Earthjustice, Martin Wagner, Managing Attorney, International Program

Latin American Federation of Associations of Relatives of Disappeared Detainees (FEDEFAM), Patricio Rice, Senior Adviser

Fédération Internationale des Ligues des Droits de l'Homme (FIDH), Sidiki Kaba, President

Fédération Internationale de l' Action des Chrétiens pour l'Abolition de la Torture, Sylvie de Pontual, President

Franciscans International, Alessandra Aula, International Advocacy Coordinator

Friends World Committee for Consultation (Quakers), Nancy Irving General Secretary

German United Nations Association, Beate Wagner, Secretary General

Global Justice (Justicia Global), Carlos E. Gaio, Internacional Relations Director

Human rights center, (Kyrgyzstan), Tolekan Ismailova

Human Rights Council of Australia, Patrick Earle, Executive Director

Human Rights Education and Information Centre, Mokube Innocent Ngoe, Director

Human Rights First, Michael Posner, President

Human Rights Institute of South Africa

Human Rights Watch, Kenneth Roth, Executive Director

Instituto de Desenvolvimento e Direitos Humanos (IDDH), Fernanda Lapa, Director (Brazil)

International Center for Law in Development, Clarence Dias

International Commission of Jurists, Nicholas Howen, Secretary General, O.P.G. Vos, Chairman Dutch section

International Helsinki Federation for Human Rights (IHF), Aaron Rhodes, Executive Director

Intercooperation and Development (INDE), Rosa Tavares

International Movement Against All Forms of Discrimination and Racism, Hideki Morihara, Secretary-General

International Service for Human Rights, Chris Sidoti, Director

Legal Aid Society of Uzbekistan, Nozima Kamalova, Chairperson

NGO Coalition on Child Rights (Egypt), Essam Ali, Secretary General

One World Trust, Simon Burall, Director

Open Society Institute and Soros Foundation Network, Morton H Halperin, Director of US Advocacy and Senior Fellow, Center for American Progress,

Organisation Mondiale Contre la Torture, Eric Sottas, Director

Pax Romana, Budi Tjahjono, UN Representation and Programme Coordinator

Resources Aimed at the Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect (RAPCAN), Carol Bower, Executive Director (South Africa)

Rights Australia, Howard Glenn, Executive Director

Rights & Democracy (Montreal), Jean Louis Roy, President

Somali Youth for Peace and Democracy (SYPD), Abdinasir Nur, Director,

Temple of Understanding, Sr. Joan Kirby, UN Representative, Chair, NGO/DPI Executive Committee Member, NGO Committee on Human Rights

The Carter Centre, Karin D. Ryan, Senior Advisor for Human Rights

Unitarian Universalist United Nations Office, Jim L. Nelson, Executive Director

United Nations Association of the United States of America, William H. Luers, President

United Nations Foundation, Timothy E. Wirth, President

World Federalist Movement, William R. Pace, Executive Director, World Federalist Movement, Canada , Warren Allmand, President

Youth Resource Center on Human Rights (CODAP- Geneva), David Matthey-Doret, Président.

The 63 signatures to this petition are from NGOs in Africa, Asia, the Americas and Europe. More are being received.

For more information please call Yvonne Terlingen, Amnesty International Representative at the United Nations + 1212 917 406 1185, or contact yterling@amnesty.org