

November 1, 2005

H.E. Mr. Jan Eliasson  
President of the 60<sup>th</sup> Session of the U.N. General Assembly  
Office of the President of the General Assembly  
United Nations  
New York, N.Y. 10017

Dear President Eliasson,

At the September 2005 World Summit, heads of state and government took a historic step towards strengthening the protection of human rights worldwide by agreeing to establish a Human Rights Council. The challenging task of implementing that decision through negotiations at this year's General Assembly was placed in your capable hands. At this crucial moment in the negotiations process, the undersigned organizations and individuals, all deeply committed to the promotion and protection of human rights, would like to emphasize our shared view regarding the key elements of a new Human Rights Council that we would consider indispensable to a credible outcome.

We start from the premise that the result of this reform must be substantially more than a change in name. The Human Rights Council must significantly enhance the U.N.'s existing capacity to protect and promote human rights. We would also stress that the key elements of the council should be adopted by the end of this year in order to allow it to begin its work in early 2006.

We believe that the following essential points must be included in the resolution creating the Human Rights Council:

**Status:** The HRC should be elevated to principal organ status within five years and should have transitional status as a subsidiary body of the General Assembly in the meantime.

**Mandate:** The HRC should address any matters relating to the protection and promotion of all human rights in any country, including specific situations of gross, systematic, continuing or urgent violations. The HRC should be empowered to make recommendations and report on all such matters to member states and bodies within the United Nations system, including to the Security Council and the General Assembly.

**Composition:** At a minimum, states seeking election to the Human Rights Council must commit to abide by the highest standards of human rights and to cooperate fully with the HRC and its mechanisms, and should put forward a platform that describes what they seek to accomplish during their term of membership.

**Elections and Voting:** Members of the HRC should be elected by an individual and direct vote of two-thirds of the General Assembly. Regional groups should be required to put forward more candidates than the number of seats allocated to their region. When voting, member states should give due regard to the positive contribution which the member state seeking election has made to the protection and promotion of human rights, as well as to the pledges it makes.

**Working Methods:** The HRC should be a standing body which meets regularly throughout the year and is able to respond in a timely fashion to any matters involving the protection and promotion of human rights. Meetings of the HRC in addition to the regular sessions could be called by one-third of HRC members, the HRC chair, the Secretary-General, or the U.N. High Commissioner for Human Rights.

**Special Procedures:** The system of special procedures should be transferred to the HRC with enhanced coherence and support, as well as greater participation in HRC meetings.

**NGO Participation:** The HRC should ensure a level of participation by NGOs at least as high as that at the Commission on Human Rights by retaining the existing rules and practices for participation by NGOs.

We believe that by incorporating each of the above elements the Human Rights Council will be able to fulfill the promise that engendered this reform. Given the inter-relationship of many of these issues, failure to secure any of these key points would compromise the entire effort.

We look forward to continuing to work with you and the co-chairs to support the establishment of an effective, credible, and authoritative Human Rights Council.

Sincerely,

Helen Darbshire, Executive Director  
Access Info Europe (Spain)

Nader Nadery, Commissioner  
Afghan Independent Human Rights Commission (Afghanistan)

Yvonne Terlingen, AI Representative at the United Nations  
Amnesty International

Albert Musliu, Executive Director  
Association for Democratic Initiatives (Macedonia)

Roberto P. Saba, Executive Director  
Association for Civil Rights (Argentina)

Bani Dugal, Principal Representative  
Bahá'í International Community, UN Office

Dr. Wajeelha S. Albaharna, President  
Bahrain Women's Society

Emma Bonino, Member of the European Parliament (Italy)

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

Denis Caillaux, Secretary General  
CARE International

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

Charlotte Bunch, Executive Director  
Center for Women's Global Leadership

Charles J. Brown, President and CEO  
Citizens for Global Solutions

Richard C. Rowson, President  
Council for a Community of Democracies

Réné Plaetevoet, Chair of the Board of Directors and Coordinator  
[www.December18.Net](http://www.December18.Net)

Ted Piccone, Executive Director  
Democracy Coalition Project

Iloana Mihaies, Executive President  
Euroregional Center for Democracy (Romania)

Carmen M. Madriñán, Executive Director  
ECPAT International

Sidiki Kaba, Président  
Fédération Internationale des Ligues des Droits de l'Homme

Djingarey Maiga, Executive Director  
Femmes et Droits Humains (Mali)

Marie-Jo Cocher, Executive Secretary  
FIACAT (International Federation of Action by Christians for the Abolition  
of Torture)

John Quigley, Executive Director  
Franciscans International

Jennifer Windsor, Executive Director  
Freedom House

Gay McDougall, Executive Director  
Global Rights

Jamils Richard Achunji Anguaseh, Program Director  
Global Welfare Association (Cameroon)

Layla Rajab Zayed, Chairperson, Board of Trustees  
Gulf Centre for Democratic Development

Sergio D'elia, Secretary General  
Hands off Cain (Italy)

Tolekan Ismailova, Director  
Human Rights Centre "Citizens against Corruption" (Kyrgyzstan)

Neil Hicks, Director of International Programs  
Human Rights First

Kenneth Roth, Executive Director  
Human Rights Watch

Hélène Sackstein, Permanent UN Representative in Geneva  
International Alliance of Women

Monique McClellan, UN Representative  
International Catholic Child Bureau (ICCB/BICE)

Nicholas Howen, Secretary-General  
International Commission of Jurists

Gareth Evans, President and CEO  
International Crisis Group

Eylah Kadjar-Hamouda, Coordinator  
International Federation Terre des Hommes

Bob Arsenault, President  
International League for Human Rights

Gorel Bogarde, UN Representative  
International Save the Children Alliance

Chris Sidoti, Director  
International Service for Human Rights

Hussain Sinjari, President  
Iraq Institute for Democracy (Iraq)

Daniela Colombo, President  
Italian Association for Women in Development (AIDOS)

Felice D. Gaer, Director  
Jacob Blaustein Institute for the Advancement of Human Rights

Thach Thach, President  
Khmers Kampuchea-Krom Federation (Vietnam)

Walid Salem, Coordinator  
MECA (Middle East Citizen Assembly)

Kok Ksor, President  
Montagnard Foundation (Vietnam)

Robin Phillips, Executive Director  
Minnesota Advocates for Human Rights (United States)

Sergio Stanzani  
No Peace without Justice (Italy)

Morton H. Halperin, Director of U.S. Advocacy  
Open Society Institute

Marco Pannella, Member of the European Parliament (Italy)

Budi Tjahjono, Programme Coordinator  
Pax Romana

Shulamith Koenig, Founding President  
PDHRE  
People's Movement for Human Rights Learning

Leonard Rubenstein, Executive Director  
Physicians for Human Rights

Liz Scurfield, Joint Representative  
Quaker Council for European Affairs

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

Kenneth H. Bacon, President  
Refugees International

Jan Mortier, Executive Director  
Researchers without Borders

Howard Glenn, Executive Director  
Rights Australia (Australia)

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

Matteo Mecacci, UN Representative  
Transnational Radical Party

Vina Nadjibulla, UN Representative  
United Methodist UN Office

Marino Busdachin, General Secretary  
UNPO (The Netherlands)

Vo Van Ai, Founder and President  
Vietnam Committee on Human Rights (Vietnam)

Joy Olson, Executive Director  
Washington Office on Latin America (WOLA)

Elly Pradervand, Executive Director  
WWSF Women's World Summit Foundation

William R. Pace, Executive Director  
World Federalist Movement

Eric Sottas, Director  
World Organisation against Torture

cc: H.E. Mr. Ricardo Alberto Arias, Co-Chair, Human Rights Council negotiations  
H.E. Mr. Dumisani Shadrack Kumalo, Co-Chair, Human Rights Council negotiations  
Mr. Kofi Annan, U.N. Secretary-General  
Ms. Louise Arbour, U.N. High Commissioner for Human Rights