



DEMOCRACY
COALITION
PROJECT



Transnational
Radical Party

DEMOCRACY CAUCUS MUST LEAD UN ACTION ON HUMAN RIGHTS AND DEMOCRACY

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September 12, 2006. A coalition of over 40 human rights and democracy leaders from around the world are calling on the United Nations Democracy Caucus to take urgent action this fall to strengthen the world body's record on democracy and human rights.

In a statement issued on September 11, the group urged UN member states participating in the Democracy Caucus to ensure the new Human Rights Council, at its second regular session on September 18, addresses the most serious human rights crises. "It is our strongly held view that the fate of the reforms to strengthen the UN's human rights system depends on the UN Democracy Caucus Members organizing a coherent, systematic, and continuous effort to ensure the body seriously addresses human rights violations in an even-handed and pro-active way." The statement's signers call attention in particular to abuses underway in the **Darfur region of Sudan**, which they argue demands a special session of the Council, as well as in North Korea, Uzbekistan, Iran, Sri Lanka and Zimbabwe.

The statement also calls on the government ministers representing the Community of Democracies to use their meeting on September 20 in New York to speak out against the alarming trend of **assaults against democracy and human rights defenders**. As documented by the UN Special Representative on Human Rights Defenders, many states are cracking down on nongovernmental organizations they consider unfriendly in violation of basic freedoms protected by domestic and international law. The joint statement calls on the Democracy Caucus to reassert these fundamental rights and support greater international monitoring of abuses in this area.

The coalition asks Democracy Caucus states to work together at the Human Rights Council to support a **credible universal periodic review mechanism** in which every UN member state will be scrutinized for its adherence to basic international human rights standards. The details of the country review system, currently being negotiated in Geneva, must incorporate a significant role for independent experts and nongovernmental organizations in order for it to be effective and credible, according to the statement.

The statement applauds the creation of the new UN Democracy Fund, which announced its first round of grants this month, and encourages Community of Democracies governments to replenish the fund "to ensure continuity of this innovative program."

The statement was coordinated by the Democracy Coalition Project, Freedom House and the Transnational Radical Party on behalf of the Campaign for a UN Democracy Caucus; more information is available at www.democracycaucus.net.