



International Service for Human Rights

Oral statement Item 2

8 September 2008

On behalf of: Association for the Prevention of Torture, Bahai International Community, Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies, Canadian HIV/AIDS Legal Network, Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative, Conectas Direitos Humanos, Franciscans International, Friends World Committee for Consultation (Quakers), Organisation Mondial Contre la Torture, and International Service for Human Rights.¹

Mr President,

Madam High Commissioner

First of all, we would like to warmly congratulate you on your appointment.

The role of the High Commissioner for Human Rights is critical to the effective promotion and protection of all human rights and serves as an inspiration for human rights defenders everywhere. This role is not only demanding and complex, it also presents a number of challenges.

The High Commissioner must act as an independent human rights advocate for upholding the highest international human rights standards, provide a voice to the most vulnerable and marginalised, strengthen the human rights system and all of its mechanisms, and advance the human rights agenda throughout the United Nations system.

Tackling key global challenges such as impunity, poverty and inequalities, discrimination, and threats to human rights defenders and their work requires vision and leadership by you, Madam High Commissioner, and your Office. The effective implementation of human rights standards is key to overcoming these challenges to the full enjoyment of all human rights by all.

¹ The statement is endorsed by the Democracy Coalition Project.

However, we have seen time and again that these standards are not beyond attacks and threats. Upholding the highest international human rights standards will require a continued and strong affirmation that the universal, indivisible, and interrelated character of human rights law cannot be lowered or compromised under any circumstances.

Strong human rights mechanisms must be bolstered to ensure their ability to protect human rights for all. Improvements in the protection offered by this system can directly contribute to the prevention of human rights violations.

Your advocacy and support for further consolidating the independence of the special procedures system, and for strengthening the universal periodic review (UPR) mechanism, and the treaty bodies are critical to ensuring the effectiveness and credibility of the human rights system. Obviously, the OHCHR's continued commitment to service all of the human rights mechanisms efficiently and professionally is also vital to their success.

The establishment and strengthening of strong national protection systems are also essential in bringing the human rights work done in Geneva and New York to the country level and ensuring its effective implementation and redress for victims of human rights violations. In this regard we encourage you to continue to support governments, national human rights institutions, and civil society in their respective roles towards implementation of recommendations made by various parts of the UN human rights system towards strengthened human rights protection.

Mainstreaming human rights into all parts of the UN system is a huge task. We encourage you to provide expert human rights advice and recommendations to all relevant bodies and organs, and in particular to the Human Rights Council, the General Assembly, and the Security Council. In this respect we trust that you will continue the efforts towards the strengthening of your Office, both in Geneva, in New York and through your Office's presence around the world.

Finally, we believe that consultation and open dialogue with governments, national human rights institutions, NGOs, and civil society at large in fulfilling the broad and independent mandate of the High Commissioner will contribute to the effectiveness of your Office. In particular, we encourage you to continue the fruitful cooperation between your Office and NGOs through regular and inclusive dialogue. In this regard we wish to highlight the importance of the dedicated Civil Society Unit within OHCHR.

We wish you well and much success in your challenging mission. We look forward to working with you and your Office towards our common goal of the full implementation and enjoyment of human rights standards across the world.

Thank you

