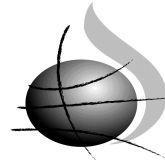




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Fédération Internationale des Ligues des Droits de l'Homme



INTERNATIONAL
COMMISSION
OF JURISTS



Geneva, 24 April 2003

Press Release

Standing Invitations to Thematic Human Rights Mechanisms

Amnesty International, the Association for the Prevention of Torture, Friends World Committee for Consultation (Quakers), Human Rights Watch, the International Catholic Migration Commission, the International Commission of Jurists, FI.ACAT, the International Federation of Human Rights Leagues and the International Rehabilitation Council for Torture Victims welcome the recent decisions of Colombia, Croatia, Ecuador, Liechtenstein, Paraguay, San Marino and Sierra Leone to extend standing invitations to all the thematic mechanisms of the UN Commission on Human Rights to visit their countries.

As of 24 April 2003, 47 States have in this way demonstrated their willingness to cooperate with these universal extra-conventional mechanisms and their commitment to the promotion and protection of human rights through the United Nations system¹.

In the framework of recent developments, we welcome the fact that the recently adopted Robben Island Guidelines (endorsed by the African Union on October 2003) stress the importance of States co-operating with the UN Commission on Human Rights and encourages them to issue standing invitations to its mechanisms.

We therefore urge the members of this year's Commission who have not yet done so to issue standing invitations: Algeria, Armenia, Australia, Bahrain, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Chile, China, Cuba, Democratic Republic of Congo, Gabon, India, Japan, Kenya, Libya, Malaysia, Pakistan, Republic of Korea, Russian Federation, Saudi

¹ Argentina, Austria, Belgium, Brazil, Bulgaria, Canada, Colombia, Costa Rica, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Ecuador, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Georgia, Greece, Guatemala, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Islamic Republic of Iran, Italy, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Mexico, Netherlands, Norway, Paraguay, Peru, Poland, Portugal, Romania, San Marino, Sierra Leone, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey, United Kingdom of Great Britain and

Arabia, Senegal, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Swaziland, Syrian Arab Republic, Thailand, Togo, Uganda, Ukraine, United States of America, Uruguay, Venezuela, Viet Nam and Zimbabwe.

The thematic mechanisms are undoubtedly an effective means to promote and protect human rights. States should do their best to facilitate visits by the Special Procedures, since they have been established by resolutions of the Commission on Human Rights, with mandates of worldwide applicability. Access to all States should therefore follow, as missions to assess problems and solutions first hand are part of their established methods of work. However, traditionally such visits can only be carried out at the invitation of the State concerned. As Governments do not always respond promptly to requests for invitations, extending a standing invitation greatly facilitates the implementation of the mandates of the Special Procedures.

The above named non-governmental organisations therefore:

- Urge all States which have not yet extended a standing invitation for country visits to all thematic human rights mechanisms of the UN Commission on Human Rights to do so;
- Request those States which have issued standing invitations to encourage others to do so ;
- Encourage States which have issued a standing invitation to facilitate the work of the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights by sending the invitations to the Office in writing;