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United Nations: Establish New Human Rights Body

Human rights organisations support Secretary-General's UN reform efforts

U.N. member states should move quickly to establish a stronger human rights body as recommended by U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan, 15 leading human rights organizations said today.

“Our organizations support the call of the Secretary-General to replace the Commission on Human Rights with a new body that has greater authority by being given a higher status in the U.N., and that, as a standing body, is able to meet whenever necessary to address human rights issues in the world,” the groups said in a joint speech to the U.N. Commission on Human Rights, which is meeting in Geneva.

The organizations argued that the new body should:

- respond quickly to human rights crises year-round through monitoring, adopting resolutions and alerting the international community;
- respond effectively to early warnings by taking preventive action—within the U.N. system and its agencies and with the international community—on the basis of reports of the High Commissioner from field presences, monitors and missions as well as reports from Special Procedures and NGOs;
- ensure follow-up and implementation of country-specific commitments and decisions, and recommendations from Special Procedures (Special Rapporteurs and Working Groups) and Treaty bodies; and
- provide a more comprehensive supervisory framework and continue to develop human rights standards and norms.

The groups also called on member states significantly to increase financial resources for the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights.

In a speech to the Commission last week, Annan recommended that U.N. member states replace the 53-member U.N. High Commission on Human Rights with a new standing Human Rights Council.

The organizations making this statement are Amnesty International, Association for the Prevention of Torture, Baha’í International Community, Centre on Housing Rights and Evictions, Colombian Commission of Jurists, Dominicans for Justice and Peace, Federation Internationale des Ligues des Droits de l’Homme, Franciscans International, Human Rights Watch, International Commission of Jurists, International Service for Human Rights, Lutheran World Federation, Organisation Mondiale Contre la Torture, Friends World Committee for Consultation (Quakers) and Rights Australia.

The full text of the statement can be found at www.icj.org

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The ICJ is an international non-governmental organisation comprising sixty of the world's most eminent jurists and has a worldwide network of national sections and affiliated organisations

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