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IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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UN Human Rights Council: The ICJ urges that the rule of law and human rights guide the relief efforts and reconstruction in Haiti

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The International Commission of Jurists (ICJ) today welcomed the affirmation by the UN Human Rights Council that human rights and the rule of law must not be forgotten behind the humanitarian crises in Haiti, following the devastating earthquake of 12 January 2010.

"The immediate priority is to ensure that relief efforts are used to address urgent and compelling human rights concerns, the rights to food, health and housing. Haiti and the international community through international cooperation and assistance will then need to adopt specific rule of law strategies to enhance legal system and foster good governance as a precondition for realization of human rights in Haiti," said Lukas Machon, ICJ Representative to the UN.

The UN Human Rights Council met in special session from 27 to 28 January 2010 in Geneva to discuss the integration of human rights and the rule of law into a recovery and reconstruction process in Haiti and to request international assistance to mitigate the effects of the earthquake, which has resulted in more than 150.000 deaths.

In its resolution adopted at the Special Session, the Council stressed the importance of a renewed and sustainable commitment to address the existing and additional challenges to the promotion and protection of human rights.

After the immediate humanitarian crisis is mitigated, there will be a need to establish a list of pressing human rights and rule of law challenges, taking into account the assessments by human rights mechanisms, including the UN Independent Expert on human rights situation in Haiti. Reconstruction strategies must aim to address both the situation of vulnerable groups, including women, children or internally displaced persons, and the long-standing sources of human rights violations, such as poverty and discrimination.

The Special Procedures of the Council and the field presence of the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights have a primary role to play in ensuring that the reconstruction efforts integrate a human rights perspective. "It is in this regard that the ICJ welcome the deployment of a joint protection team of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights and the UN High Commissioner for Refugees to assist, among others, in reunification of children with their families," concluded Machon.

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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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