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IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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ICJ welcomes the adoption of draft Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights

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On Friday April 4, 2008, the Open-ended Working Group on an Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights adopted by consensus the Draft Optional Protocol and decided to transmit it to the Human Rights Council.

"The adoption of the Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights is an important first step, which must be followed by its adoption by the UN Human Rights Council in its June session and the UN General Assembly. A timely adoption will constitute an adequate homage to the 60th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, with its promise of interdependence, indivisibility and universality of all human rights." Said the International Commission of Jurists (ICJ).

After five years of work, the Working Group considered that the time came to put an end to the historical gap in the protection of economic, social and cultural rights (ESC rights) in the international sphere, and to adopt an Optional Protocol that would allow victims of violations of these rights to lodge complaints before the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. The draft Optional Protocol also includes the competence of the Committee to initiate inquiries in case of grave and systematic violations of ESC rights, to consider inter-state communications, and to request preliminary measures to State parties in case of risk of irreparable damage to the right set forth by the Covenant.

The ICJ welcomes this achievement by the Working Group and the work of its President-Rapporteur, Catarina de Albuquerque, from Portugal. While the text is the result of compromises between different State interests, it has nevertheless embraced a comprehensive approach, covering all the economic, social and cultural rights set forth by the Covenant.

The ICJ urges members States of the Human Rights Council to approve the draft transmitted by the Working Group, and to transmit it to the UN General Assembly.

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