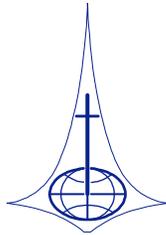




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UN Human Rights Council, second session

Joint statement by Amnesty International, Association for the Prevention of Torture, Human Rights Watch, International Federation of Human Rights, International Service for Human Rights, The Lutheran World Federation and the World Organisation Against Torture

**on the Progress report of the Working Group on the implementation of operative paragraph 6 of General Assembly resolution 60/251
3 October 2006**

Delivered by Innocent Sama

Mr President

The central contribution that Special Procedures can make to the work of this UN main human rights organ has been illustrated at this session in the interactive dialogues with mandate-holders. Many positive elements of this first Council's interactive dialogues should be built upon; including the time allocated for consideration of the reports and the active participation of all stakeholders. This interaction, including in relation to follow-up to reports and recommendations, should become an integral and regular part of the Council's sessions throughout the year.

The inclusion of Special Procedures at this session has also highlighted the continuing need for the Council to maintain a system that is innovative, responsive and flexible, and which can assist the Council in carrying out its mandate, including implementation of its decisions, as we have seen in respect of two joint reports presented at this session.

The dialogues have also demonstrated that the value of Special Procedures system depends on cooperation in relation to country visits, communications and urgent appeals.

The mission and follow-up to mission reports of the Special Procedures identify concrete steps to be taken at the national and international levels to strengthen human rights protection. We note the confidence expressed in the Special Procedures by states from all regions through the announcement of visits to be undertaken in the near future, including the positive responses to requests to visit which have been outstanding for several years. Many governments have engaged in the interactive dialogues at this session as “concerned states”, while others have reported to the Council on steps taken to implement past Special Procedures’ recommendations. We recall that many states have yet to extend invitations to visit, thus creating a “double standard” whereby those states which are most open to the Special Procedures receive greatest scrutiny, while those that do not, evade criticism.

Reports of communications with governments record Special Procedures’ interventions on behalf of several hundred individuals in response to alleged violations. Some of these interventions, the urgent appeals, show the need for a system to respond rapidly to credible reports that a violation is imminent, is occurring, or has taken place, without the constraints of bureaucratic procedures. For urgent appeals and other communications to be effective, they must be answered. Unfortunately, several of the Special Procedures have highlighted a poor rate of response to their communications.

We call on the Council to demand of its members and observers full cooperation with the Special Procedures by:

- integrating throughout its deliberations Special Procedures’ information and analysis;
- encouraging member states to respond positively to requests to visit;
- reviewing states’ willingness to respond quickly and fully to urgent appeals and communications and taking steps to encourage those states that persistently fail to do so to provide such responses.
- acting on the Special Procedures’ recommendations, including where they call for continuing debate within and action by the Council.
- ensuring that the interactive dialogue leads to concrete outcomes that will enhance human rights protections;
- taking up for consideration matters proposed by the Special Procedures.

Failure by the Council to ensure full cooperation with Special Procedures and give effect to their recommendations will undermine the Special Procedures system and diminish what it has to offer the Council.

Mr President,

Defining a system of Special Procedures that can best support the Council should be the first task of the Working Group charged with reviewing the Special Procedures. We call on this Council not to take any decisions prejudicing the work of the Working Group and look forward to sharing our recommendations for a strengthened Special Procedures system in the Working Group.