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Dear Minister,

OPEN LETTER RE: BURKINA FASO'S CANDIDACY FOR ELECTION TO THE UN HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL

We write on the occasion of Burkina Faso's candidacy for membership of the UN Human Rights Council in the elections scheduled for 20 May 2011. We note your submission election pledges to promote and protect human rights at the national and international levels, as indicated in the Annex to the letter dated 20 April 2011 from the Permanent Representative of Burkina Faso to the United Nations to the President of the General Assembly.

The Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights has issued guidance in the form of a framework for voluntary pledges and commitments by Member States when presenting candidatures for the Human Rights Council, including that these should make specific, measurable and verifiable commitments.¹ We also recall that, according to General Assembly resolution 60/251, members of the Council shall uphold the highest standards in the promotion and protection of human rights and fully cooperate with the Council.² We take this opportunity to make some comments on Burkina Faso's election pledges and to note some additional opportunities for your government to promote and protect human rights on the occasion of its candidature.

1. Commitments at the international level:

■ *Ratification of international human rights instruments*

We note that Burkina Faso has yet to ratify the Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and the Optional Protocols to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. We take this opportunity to encourage you to ratify these Optional Protocols and also to make statements under Article 31 of the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance, Article 77 of the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families, and Article 14 of International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination to allow for individual communications.

■ *Cooperation with the Special Procedures*

We welcome your commitment to cooperate fully with the mechanisms of the Human Rights Council, including the Special Procedures, by responding swiftly and substantively to their messages. We take

¹ *Suggested Elements for Voluntary Pledges and Commitments by Candidates for Election to the Human Rights Council* prepared by the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights <http://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/hrcouncil/docs/pledges.pdf>

² Operative paragraph 9.

this opportunity to encourage you to issue a standing invitation to the Procedures to visit Burkina Faso, and to facilitate the forthcoming visit by the Working Group on arbitrary detention, scheduled for September 2011.

■ *Cooperation with the treaty monitoring bodies*

We note that a number of periodic reports are overdue to the treaty monitoring bodies. We urge you to submit these without further delay, in particular to the Human Rights Committee, the Committee on Economic and Cultural Rights, and the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination.

■ *Engagement with the Universal Periodic Review*

We welcome your commitment to comprehensively meet the commitments made during the Universal Periodic Review to address human rights issues. We consider of particular importance the recommendations, made to Burkina Faso during the review in 2008, to redouble efforts to eliminate discrimination against women and to fully apply the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women; to adopt legislation aimed at ultimately abolishing death penalty; and to intensify efforts to reinforce the human rights protection system and fight impunity. We urge you to give effect to these recommendations without delay.

■ *Participation in the deliberations of the Human Rights Council*

As you know, all members of the Council are required to fully cooperate fully with it. In this regard, we urge you to work towards better use of the Council's broad range of working methods and practices to address situations that require its attention and to improve the follow up by the Council of initiatives, including by its expert mechanisms and subsidiary bodies.

2. Commitments at the national level:

■ *National human rights policy*

We note your commitments to vigorously pursue the fulfilment of commitments for human rights to take root in Burkina Faso and to take effective action against blatant and systematic human rights violations. In this regard, we encourage your to urgently address impunity for human rights violations, to abolish the death penalty, and to ensure the fulfilment of women's human rights.

We welcome the pledges and commitments already made by Burkina Faso and encourage your government to use this opportunity to further strengthen its pledges and commitments by including the additional elements listed above. We encourage your government to announce the steps it will take to fulfil its electoral pledges, whether it is successful in gaining a seat on the Council or not, and to regularly inform the Council of progress in implementing these commitments. This could, for example, be done in the form of an oral or written statement to the Council.

We would be pleased to receive your comments and responses to the issues raised in this letter.

A copy of this letter has been sent to your country's permanent missions in Geneva and New York.

Yours sincerely,



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Amnesty International