

NGO Response to the Voluntary Principles Participation Criteria

16 February 2006

We the undersigned nongovernmental organizations are deeply disappointed with the inability to finalize participation criteria at the last Plenary.

The Voluntary Principles process is at a critical crossroads and its long-term sustainability and credibility is contingent on the implementation of these criteria as a minimum but essential measure of adherence by participants. We strongly encourage the Plenary, Steering Committee, and the relevant working groups to quickly and expeditiously develop robust reporting guidelines on the implementation of the Principles, and an effective process for appointing investigative panels and recommending remedial measures for non-compliance. These systems should be operational by 2007 at the latest, must affirm the importance of all three institutions represented in the Plenary, and should be intended to maximize the effective implementation of the Principles in order to avoid complicity in human rights abuses.

We will cautiously support the revised criteria as circulated on February 2, 2006-and are comfortable with the deletion of the phrase "In the case of a current participant" as proposed by several members of the Plenary. However continued progress in these areas, particularly in implementation and reporting largely determine whether we can continue to participate in the process in the long term.

Amnesty International
The Fund for Peace
Human Rights First
Human Rights Watch
International Alert
Oxfam America
Pax Christi