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HE Mr Jean-Marie Ehouzou
Minister of Foreign Affairs
BP 318 Cotonou
Bénin

**AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL**



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Dear Minister,

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

We write on the occasion of Benin's election to 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 *note verbale* dated 13 May 2011 to the President of the General Assembly. We are concerned that these were not posted on the official UN election site until the day of the elections leaving little time for States to consider these prior to casting their votes.

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 note some opportunities for your government to promote and protect human rights on the occasion of its candidature in addition to those included in your pledges.

1. Commitments at the international level:

■ *Ratification of international human rights instruments*

We welcome Benin's commitment to complete the procedure to ratify the Second Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights aiming at abolishing the death penalty and to ratify the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the International Convention on the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance. We take this opportunity to encourage you to also ratify the Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Right, the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, and the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families, as well as make the declaration under Article 14 of the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination recognizing the competence of the Committee to consider individual communications.

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.

■ *Cooperation with the Special Procedures*

We welcome your commitment to work with the Special Procedures of the Human Rights Council and strongly encourage you to extend a standing invitation to the Procedures to visit Benin.

■ *Cooperation with the treaty monitoring bodies*

We note that periodic reports are overdue to the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and urge you to submit these without further delay.

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

We note your commitment, reiterated in your election pledges, to devote your term on the Council to cooperate on the promotion and protection of human rights and to participate in all its work. 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:

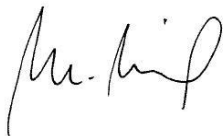
■ *National human rights policy*

We note your commitments to protect the rights of children by adopting measures to combat the phenomenon of "child sorcerers", to improve living conditions by ensuring access to shelter, medical care, food, clothing and education, and to strengthen measures to promote cost-free access to compulsory primary education. We also welcome your commitment to prohibit torture by strengthening legal frameworks, ensuring detention facilities conform to international norms and implementing a national torture-prevention mechanism, and to guarantee the full participation by women in the decision-making processes for all national political positions and to strengthen the public campaign to combat violence against women.

We welcome the pledges and commitments already made by Benin and encourage your government to use this opportunity to further strengthen these by including the additional elements listed above. We encourage your government to announce the steps it will take to fulfil its electoral pledges 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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