

Geneva, 18 January, 2012

**Open letter on the Russian Federation's draft resolution at the General Assembly: Working Group on the Reform of the Human Rights Treaty Bodies**

Excellency,

We are addressing you on behalf of the undersigned international human rights NGOs that are committed to supporting and strengthening the work of the UN treaty bodies. As a group we have been actively involved in the ongoing discussions about the treaty body strengthening process, which was initiated by the High Commissioner for Human Rights in September 2009. We would like to express our concerns about recent developments, which call for your prompt attention to ensure that these developments can contribute positively to this ongoing process.

On 20 December 2011, the Russian Federation circulated to Permanent Missions in New York a proposal to establish an open-ended Working Group of the General Assembly (UNGA WG) *to conduct open, transparent and inclusive negotiations on the issue of the reform of the human rights treaty body system*. This initiative has been discussed in two informal negotiations in early January and it is expected that it will be discussed again this Thursday before being brought to a vote this coming Friday, 20 January 2012.

Through our ongoing dialogue with Permanent Missions to the United Nations Office at Geneva, it has become apparent that there is limited awareness about this initiative amongst delegates responsible for human rights issues, including relations with the treaty bodies and the OHCHR, in the Permanent Missions in Geneva. Proper arrangements must be made in the proposed resolution to draw on the experience and expertise of Geneva delegates and other stakeholders with the treaty bodies.

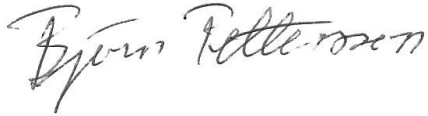
The undersigned organisations have all been actively involved in work with the treaty bodies and the treaty body strengthening discussions and we are committed to continuing an inclusive approach in these final stages of the process. Establishing an inter-governmental working group to deliberate and make recommendations on the strengthening process is a step that needs careful consideration. Therefore, it is critical that all relevant stakeholders, including Permanent Missions in Geneva, have the opportunity to provide their input prior to such a decision. It is equally important to ensure that the timing and scope of the UNGA process accommodates and takes account of the ongoing and upcoming consultations on treaty body reform with States in Geneva and New York, in February and April respectively, and the publication of a report by the High Commissioner for Human Rights expected for the summer 2012.

We would therefore propose, for your consideration, that your Mission in New York be asked to seek the opportunities for further consultations to allow your Mission here in Geneva, and other stakeholders with treaty body experience, to be properly consulted before the draft resolution of the Russian Federation is brought forward for adoption.

With a view to the upcoming consultations in Geneva and New York and the eventual work of the UNGA WG, the undersigned organisations would welcome the

opportunity to continue to discuss the treaty body strengthening process with you or members of your Permanent Mission.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Bjorn Pettersson". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Bjorn Pettersson  
Director  
International Service for Human Rights

*On behalf of:*

*Amnesty International  
Centre for Civil and Political Rights (CCPR)  
Center for Legal and Social Studies (CELS)  
Humanas  
International Commission of Jurists (ICJ)  
International Rehabilitation Council for Torture Victims (IRCT)  
International Service for Human Rights (ISHR)  
World Organisation Against Torture (OMCT)*