



**DEMOCRACY
COALITION
PROJECT**



**Transnational
Radical Party**

February 14, 2006

To: Foreign Ministers of the Convening
Group of the Community of Democracies

CC: Respective Permanent Representatives to
the United Nations

As you know, the negotiations for the creation of a new Human Rights Council have now entered a final stage. While we write, the results of the ongoing consultations in New York can still result either in success, with effective reform of the Commission on Human Rights, or in failure.

We call on you as representatives of democratic countries to play an active role in securing a successful outcome of this process; a process that is rightly considered by both Governmental and non-governmental actors essential for shaping the future of the United Nations.

The Community of Democracies must act as a leader in ensuring that the aspirations of all those who believe that the United Nations can effectively advance democratic values and protect human rights are fulfilled. Such a role is heralded by the commitments undertaken by your Governments at the Ministerial Conferences of the Community of Democracies over the last five years. We believe that now is the time to satisfy those commitments.

We reiterate our appreciation to Mali for coordinating the statement issued by the UN Democracy Caucus on November 17, and now call on you to ensure that the voices of the world's democracies are heard clearly at this critical stage of the negotiations.

While the February 6 text includes important elements for a new Human Rights Council, which should be confirmed, we would like to emphasize the following essential elements that should be included in the resolution that will establish it:

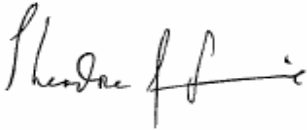
- The resolution must ensure an improved membership mechanism in which States engaged in gross, systematic human rights violations are not elected. We believe that this objective can be secured by ensuring an individual and direct vote of two-thirds of the General Assembly, by requiring regional groups to put forward more candidates than the number of seats allocated to their region, and by considering a candidate's human rights record and its pledges to abide by the highest human rights standards and cooperate with the Council when voting. While this requirement will not make it more difficult for most states to get elected, it serves as an objective tool for excluding the worst human rights abusers. In so doing, the two-thirds vote on clean slates requirement and membership criteria would redress the credibility deficit that plagues the current Commission on Human Rights. In addition, this requirement would serve to deter regional groups from putting forward candidates who have poor human rights records.
- In order to maintain a Council membership made up of governments that abide by the highest standards of human rights, procedures should be established for the Council to suspend the privileges of countries that are found by the Council - either through periodic review of their records or through situation-specific resolutions - to be clearly involved in human rights violations.

- The resolution should provide that the Council schedule no fewer than six meetings per year for a total duration of no less than twelve weeks, especially given the time and resource demands that a universal review mandate will add to the work of the Council.

As Members of the Convening Group of the Community of Democracies, you have a special responsibility to lead the global effort to promote the values of human rights and democracy enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the Warsaw Declaration. We urge you to speak out collectively as leaders of the Democracy Caucus in support of the above essential points to ensure that the Human Rights Council is equipped to protect the rights of men and women around the world.

With assurances of our highest consideration,

Sincerely,



Ted Piccone
Executive Director
Democracy Coalition Project



Jennifer Windsor
Executive Director
Freedom House



Matteo Mecacci
UN Representative
Transnational Radical Party