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Amnesty International's Ten-point Program for the Creation of an Authoritative and Effective Human Rights Council

Heads of State and Government, convening in New York at the September 2005 World Summit, decided to strengthen the United Nations human rights machinery and create a Human Rights Council (HRC). This decision requires that the new Council be a substantive improvement on the UN's current capacity to protect and promote human rights. The Council must address full respect for *all* human rights in *all* countries without any discrimination. It must have, and be seen to have, legitimacy in the eyes of governments, civil society and the victims of human rights violations. The following ten objectives must be met in the creation of the new Council:

- The HRC must be a principal organ of the United Nations, if not immediately then within five years. Such status will acknowledge the prominence of human rights as one of the three pillars of the United Nations.
- The HRC's mandate must allow the Council to address any matters relating to the protection and promotion of any human rights in any country, including situations of gross, systematic, or continuing violations as well as crisis situations.
- The HRC must be a standing body with regular meetings scheduled throughout the year to allow the Council to address all the above situations promptly and effectively.
- The HRC must be able to provide information and make recommendations to Member States and other UN bodies, including the General Assembly, the Security Council and the Economic and Social Council.
- The HRC's electoral system must encourage membership from states committed to the promotion and protection of human rights, and candidate states should make public human rights commitments well in advance of the election date. Measures must be adopted to ensure genuine, contested elections. For example, there should be no regional "clean slates" (there must be more candidates than seats for each regional group), and successful candidate states must obtain the votes of a two-thirds majority of the General Assembly.
- Membership of the HRC must be effectively open to all members of the United Nations, and elections must take into account the need for due regional representation. If the use of regional "clean slates" is not precluded, membership terms of the HRC should be limited, with a break in membership of at least one year at the end of each term.
- The HRC must retain the existing independent experts known as the Special Procedures, and fully integrate their information and analysis into its deliberations and decision-making.
- The HRC must retain the rules for participation by NGOs based on Article 71 of the UN Charter and the practices applied by the Commission on Human Rights.
- The creation of the HRC must be accompanied by the dedicated resources necessary for the Council to carry out its mandate in full.
- The HRC must be ready to convene by the end of February 2006.