



March 2, 2009

Dear \_\_\_\_\_,

The NGO Coalition for an Optional Protocol warmly welcomes the adoption of the Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (Optional Protocol) at the United Nations General Assembly on 10<sup>th</sup> December 2008. On the 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, it is of great significance that victims of violations of economic, social and cultural rights finally have a mechanism, at the international level, through which they can seek remedies to redress those violations. We are very appreciative of the positive contributions your State played throughout this process.

By adopting this long awaited instrument, the General Assembly has corrected historic imbalances and has strongly reaffirmed the universality, indivisibility and interdependence of all human rights. This achievement is of momentous importance and represents the end result of the unflinching commitment and dedication of all involved. This Optional Protocol also reinforces the commitment of States to the development of effective remedies for victims of violations of economic, social and cultural rights as part of a harmonious human rights system within international human rights law. As the previous High Commissioner on Human Rights, Louise Arbour, noted, it represents "human rights made whole", restoring the original unified vision of the UDHR.

We are, however, acutely conscious of the need for States to translate their commitments into reality. We look forward with anticipation to the Optional Protocol being opened for signature in 2009. We ask your government to continue to support the Optional Protocol and to commit to its early entry into force. We therefore urge \_\_\_\_\_ to make a statement in that regard at the 10<sup>th</sup> Session of the Human Rights Council, which will take place from 2 to 27 March 2009. Your government's efforts in seeking the support of other member states to ensure that the Optional Protocol enters into force at the earliest opportunity would also be much appreciated. We would also emphasize how important recommendations made to states under the Universal Periodic Review can be in prompting states to give serious consideration to signing and ratifying this Optional Protocol.

A copy of this letter will be sent to your country's Permanent Mission to the United Nations in Geneva.

Thank you for your support.

Yours sincerely,

The Steering Committee of the International NGO Coalition for an Optional Protocol to the ICESCR\*:

Amnesty International, International Secretariat, UK; Centre on Housing Rights and Evictions (COHRE), Switzerland; International Network for Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ESCR-Net), USA; Food First Information and Action Network (FIAN) International Secretariat, Germany; International Commission of Jurists (ICJ), Switzerland; International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH), France; International Women's Rights Action Watch Asia-Pacific (IWRAW Asia-Pacific), Malaysia; Inter-American Platform of Human Rights, Democracy and Development (PIDHDD), Paraguay; Social Rights Action Centre, (SRAC), Canada

If you would like to contact the Steering Committee please e-mail [op\\_coalition@yahoo.de](mailto:op_coalition@yahoo.de) or call the ESCR-Net Office and leave a message for Suad Elías Atala at +1(212) 681 12 36 Ext. 26

*\*The NGO Coalition for an OP is formed by more than 200 organizations and individuals working for social justice worldwide.*