April 7, 2009

Dear _____,

The NGO Coalition for an Optional Protocol, formed by more than 200 organizations and individual members worldwide, working for human rights and social justice, celebrates 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 10th December 2008. On the 60th 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 and the GRULAC played throughout this process.

By adopting this long awaited instrument, the UN General Assembly has corrected historic imbalances and has strongly reaffirmed the universality, indivisibility and inter-dependence of all human rights. This achievement is of momentous importance and represents the end result of the unfailing commitment and dedication of all involved. This Optional Protocol also reinforces the commitment of States to develop 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, and complements the strengths of the Inter-American Human Rights System ensuring wider protection of the full scope of human rights of the those who inhabit the region. Furthermore, as established in the Inter-American Democratic Charter, the promotion and observance of economic, social, and cultural rights are inherently linked to integral development, equitable economic growth, and to the consolidation of democracy in the States of the hemisphere. The Optional Protocol establishes an essential tool to achieve this promotion and observance and to secure the prosperity of the citizens of the hemisphere. It opens a critical space to seek justice through the elimination of poverty and hunger, the creation of fairs jobs, and an elevation in the standard of living of all the people of the region; all central elements of the Fifth Summit of the Americas.

We are, however, acutely conscious of the need for States to translate their commitments into reality. We ask your government to support the Optional Protocol and to commit to its early entry into force. We therefore urge _____ to make a statement in support at the Fifth Summit of the Americas. Your government's efforts in seeking the support of other member states, and of the region as a whole, to ensure that the Optional Protocol enters into force at the earliest opportunity would be welcome.

A copy of this letter will be sent to your country's representative to the Summit.

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; Community Law Centre, South Africa; 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 selias@escr-net.org or call the ESCR-Net Office and leave a message for Suad Elías Atala at +1(212) 681 12 36 Ext. 26