

March 6, 2006

The Honorable Condoleezza Rice  
Secretary of State  
U.S. Department of State  
2201 C Street, N.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20520

Dear Secretary Rice:

I write to express the support of the American Bar Association for the United States' position on reform of the UN Human Rights Commission. The American Bar Association last year adopted a detailed set of recommendations urging fundamental reform of the United Nations human rights process, including the establishment of a Human Rights Council to replace the current, under-performing, Human Rights Commission. The President of the General Assembly (GA) recently presented a draft resolution on the establishment of a Human Rights Council that contains many of the elements recommended by the ABA.

We hope that this crucial new UN body will be established and activated as soon as possible. We also believe strongly that members should be elected to the new Council by a two-thirds majority of the General Assembly. Accordingly, we applaud the Administration's effort to amend Operative Paragraph # 7 of the GA President's draft, which presently contemplates election by a majority of the General Assembly. Your strong stance on this issue is commendable, and we urge you to maintain it.

The ABA also supports a smaller Council, as the Administration has proposed. We believe that a smaller Council would go a long way toward ensuring the Council's effectiveness and would also be more likely to prevent human rights abusers from becoming members of the Council. The ABA supports other refinements to the GA President's draft as well. For example, we believe the rules of the new Council should: (1) preclude membership of any UN Member State that is subject to censure by the Human Rights Council or to actions taken by the Security Council under Chapter VII of the UN Charter; and (2) direct the UN Secretary-General to use his good offices to persuade members to select only states with good human rights records for membership.

Please let us know if the ABA can be helpful in the efforts of the United States to achieve reform of the UN Human Rights Commission consistent with the views we have adopted.

Sincerely,



Michael S. Greco