



ASIAN FORUM FOR HUMAN RIGHTS AND DEVELOPMENT

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21 April 2006

Dear Prime Minister Abdullah Ahmad Badawi,

CC:

Mr. Dato' Seri Syed Hamid Albar, Minister of Foreign Affairs
Mr. Dato' Hamidon Ali, Ambassador and Permanent Representative to the UN in New York
Ambassador and Permanent Representative to the UN in Geneva
Mr. Tan Sri Abu Talib bin Othman, Chairman, Human Rights Commission of Malaysia (SUHAKAM)
Mr. Homayoun Alizadeh, Regional Representative for South East Asia, Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights

Subject: Election of membership for the new United Nations (UN) Human Rights Council on 9 May 2006

The Asian Forum for Human Rights and Development (FORUM-ASIA), a regional non-governmental organisation (NGO) in consultative status with United Nation's Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), Suara Rakyat Malaysia (SUARAM), Aliran Kesedaran Negara (ALIRAN) and National Human Rights Society (HAKAM), appreciate the advanced declaration of Malaysia's interest in standing for the election for membership in the new Human Rights Council.

As the next step, we **urge Malaysia to make specific and credible public pledges and commitments** in support of Malaysia's candidacy to the Human Rights Council. The General Assembly Resolution establishing the Human Rights Council (A/60/251) clearly states that: "when electing members of the Council, Member States shall take into contribution of candidates to the promotion and protection of human rights and their **voluntary pledges and commitments** made thereto" (para 8).

We note that many of the Member States interested in serving as a member of the Human Rights Council have already started making such pledges, which have been made available on the UN website at <http://www.un.org/ga/60/elect/hrc/>. However, we note with concern that the majority of candidates from the Asian Group have not made any public pledges (except for Bangladesh, China, Kyrgyzstan and Sri Lanka).

Given that Asia is the only region in the world which lacks a regional human rights mechanism, we consider it particularly important for Asian countries to publicly commit themselves to promoting and protecting all human rights.

Other candidates have issued pledges that they will implement as a member of the Council, such as:

- Issuing standing invitations to the Special Procedures;
- Improving opportunities for contributions to the Council by NGOs;
- Ratifying additional international human rights treaties;
- Submitting the reports to the Treaty Bodies within the deadline and ensuring follow-up to the recommendations;
- Enhancing cooperation with the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR).

We call on you to commit Malaysia to the promotion and protection of human rights both domestically and internationally through making specific commitments, including but not limited to the commitments we attach to this letter.

We look forward to your response and the public announcement of Malaysia's pledges.

Yours Sincerely,

Anselmo Lee, Executive Director, FORUM-ASIA, on behalf of:

Yap Swee Seng, Executive Director, Suara Rakyat Malaysia (SUARAM)
P. Ramakrishnan, President, Aliran Kesedaran Negara (ALIRAN)
Elizabeth Wong, Secretary General, National Human Rights Society (HAKAM)