Mr. Secretary-General Ban Ki Moon,

The International Coordinating Committee of National Institutions for the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights and the Regional Coordinating Committees of National Human Rights Institutions for the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights hereby request your consideration and support for their application for permanent observer status at the United Nations General Assembly.

A description of the organisations and the justification for the granting of permanent observer status is included in the attached Annex 1.

Should you have any questions regarding this application please address your correspondence to:

Signed

Mousa Burayzat
Chairperson – International Coordinating Committee of National Institutions for the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights

Mabedle Lourence Mushwana
Chairperson – Network of African National Human Rights Institutions

Ramiro Rivadaneira Silva
Chairperson - Network of National Human Rights Institutions of the Americas

Amara Pongsapich
Chairperson – Asia Pacific Forum of National Human Rights Institutions

Alan Miller
Chairperson – European Coordinating Committee of National Human Rights Institutions
ANNEX 1. SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION

THE ICC

The International Coordinating Committee of National Human Rights Institutions for the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights (hereafter “the ICC”) is the international membership organisation national human rights institutions.¹

The Regional Coordinating Committees of Africa, the Americas, the Asia Pacific and Europe (hereafter “the RCCs”) are the regional membership organisations of national human rights institutions.²

The ICC and RCCs facilitate cooperation between, and coordination of, national human rights institutions (hereafter “NHRIs”) as they seek to promote and protect human rights at the regional and international levels.

HISTORY

In 1946, two years before the Universal Declaration of Human Rights became the common standard of achievement for all peoples and nations, the United Nations Economic and Social Council invited Member States to consider establishing information groups or local human rights committees to promote human rights awareness at the domestic level.

In 1978, the then Commission on Human Rights developed draft guidelines for the structure and functioning of NHRIs. In 1993, the United Nations General Assembly endorsed a more detailed set of “Principles on the Establishment and Functioning of National Human Rights Institutions”, (hereafter “the Paris Principles”).³ The General Assembly subsequently invited States to take appropriate steps to establish and strengthen NHRIs. Similarly, in 1993, the ICC was established to facilitate NHRI cooperation in the promotion and protection of human rights at the regional and international levels. The four RCCs were subsequently established and together they work with and support more than 90 NHRIs from each of the four ICC regions.

OBJECTIVES AND ACTIVITIES

The ICC and RCCs were established to assist NHRIs to fulfill their mandates through international and regional cooperation, training and advocacy. The organisations do so by:

- collaborating with NHRIs in activities at the international, regional and national levels;
- promoting greater information sharing and communication amongst NHRIs and other stakeholders; and

¹ National human rights institutions (NHRIs) are State bodies with a constitutional or legislative mandate to protect and promote human rights. They are part of the State apparatus and are funded by the State. However, they operate and function independently from government. While their specific mandates may vary, the general role of NHRIs is to address discrimination in all its forms, as well as to promote the protection of civil, cultural, economic, political and social rights. They help to bridge the ‘protection gap’ between the rights of individuals and the responsibilities of the State through core functions that include complaint handling, human rights education and making recommendations on law reform.

² The four regional coordinating committees are: the Network of African National Human Rights Institutions, the Network of National Human Rights Institutions of the Americas; the Asia Pacific Forum of National Human Rights Institutions; and the European Coordinating Committee of National Human Rights Institutions.

³ Per General Assembly resolution 48/134 of 20 December 1993.
- facilitating greater interaction and cooperation with the United Nations.

The ICC and RCCs also promote the establishment and strengthening of NHRIs in conformity with existing international standards through activities such as:
- promoting awareness of the General Assembly-endorsed Paris Principles;
- fostering and promoting education and training opportunities
- encouraging the provision of technical assistance; and
- the accreditation and re-accreditation of ICC members.

The RCCs also provide specialised technical services including through the provision of legal and legislative advice, policy development, advocacy and training.

The benefit of this form of international and regional cooperation can be seen in recent activities focusing on business and human rights. In 2010, the ICC organised an International Conference on Business and Human Rights, which served to highlight developments at the international level, including the ‘Protect, Respect and Remedy’ Framework developed by the former Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary General on human rights and transnational corporations and other business enterprises. In 2011, the RCCs convened follow-up regional conferences to consider the role of NHRIs in promoting awareness and implementation of the Framework and the subsequent Guiding Principles adopted by the United Nations Human Rights Council earlier that year. In 2012, a number of regional, sub-regional and national initiatives will further promote implementation of the Framework and Principles at the regional and domestic level.

MEMBERS

Membership of the ICC and RCCs is open to NHRIs established by any United Nations Member State. NHRIs that are established and function in compliance with the Paris Principles are entitled to hold governance positions and to vote at General Meetings of the ICC.

There are currently 91 members of the ICC and RCCs as follows:

1. Afghanistan
2. Albania
3. Algeria
4. Argentina
5. Armenia
6. Australia
7. Austria
8. Azerbaijan
9. Bangladesh
10. Belgium
11. Bolivia
12. Bosnia and Herzegovina
13. Bulgaria
14. Burkina Faso
15. Cameroon
16. Canada
17. Chad
18. Colombia
19. Congo
20. Costa Rica
21. Croatia
22. Denmark
23. Ecuador
24. Ecuador
25. Egypt
26. El Salvador
27. Estonia
28. Ethiopia
29. Finland
30. France
31. Georgia
32. Honduras
33. Hungary
34. India
35. Indonesia
36. Ireland
37. Jordan
38. Kenya
39. Kazakhstan
40. Kyrgyzstan
41. Luxembourg
42. Macedonia
43. Malawi
44. Malaysia
45. Maldives
46. Mali
47. Mauritania
48. Mauritius
49. Mexico
50. Moldova
51. Mongolia
52. Morocco
53. Namibia
54. Nepal
55. Netherlands
56. Nigeria
57. Norway
58. Pakistan
59. Panama
60. People’s Republic of China
61. Peru
62. Paraguay
63. Peru
64. Poland
65. Portugal
66. Qatar
67. Republic of Korea
68. Romania
69. Russia
70. Rwanda
71. Senegal
72. Serbia
73. Sierra Leone
74. Slovakia
75. Slovenia
76. South Africa
77. Spain
78. Sri Lanka
79. Tajikistan
80. Tanzania
81. Thailand
82. The Netherlands
83. The Philippines
84. Timor Leste
Membership is spread evenly across the four ICC regions of Africa, the Americas, the Asia-Pacific and Europe.

International and intergovernmental organisations with similar objectives may and do participate in the activities of the ICC as observers.

**ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURE**

The organs of the ICC are the:
- General Meeting
- Bureau
- RCCs
- Chairperson; and
- Secretary.

The General Meeting of members is the supreme deliberative body of the ICC and has overall control of the organisation's activities. It adopts and reviews the program of activities; is responsible for electing the membership and monitoring the activities of the ICC Bureau (the Board of Directors); is responsible for approving amendments to the ICC Charter; and approves the budget and financial reports.

The ICC Bureau (hereafter “the Bureau”) is the equivalent of the Board of Directors and implements the decisions of the General Meeting. It is responsible for the day-to-day functions of the ICC including: the development of organisational policies and procedures; the implementation of programs; monitoring financial accounts; and the delivery of services to members. The Bureau is comprised of 16 members, four drawn from each of the ICC’s regional groups.

RCCs have been established to represent and support NHRIIs from each of the four ICC regions. They are responsible for nominating members to the ICC Bureau and to the positions of Chairperson and Secretary. They host regional conferences and workshops, conduct advocacy and training, and provide advice and other services directly to NHRIIs. RCCs may also take direct responsibility for the implementation of particular ICC initiatives on behalf of the broader membership.

The ICC Chairperson is responsible for advancing the work of the ICC on a daily basis by implementing the decisions of the ICC General Meeting and the Bureau. In so doing, the ICC Chairperson consults and works in cooperation with the regional Chairpersons.

**FUNDING**

The funds of the ICC and RCCs may be derived from:
- annual membership subscriptions
- grants from governments
- grants from international and national public organisations; and
- donations.
RELATIONS WITH OTHER ORGANISATIONS

The ICC, RCCs and member NHRI s have a strong relationship with the United Nations, including the Human Rights Council and its mechanisms, and a range of United Nations agencies such as UNDP, UNICEF, UN Women, UNFPA and the OHCHR. The relationship and breadth of their activities are well documented in the United Nations Secretary-General's 2012 report to the Human Rights Council on NHRI s (A/HRC/20/9).

The ICC also maintains relationships with other international, regional and intergovernmental organisations, as well as with non-governmental organisations.

REASONS TO REQUEST OBSERVER STATUS

The ICC is convinced that NHRI s serve a unique and crucial role in promoting and protecting human rights and fundamental freedoms.

At the country level, NHRI s promote greater understanding of human rights, strengthen public participation, and support good governance and the rule of law.

At the international level, the ICC, RCCs and NHRI s form a bridge between States and the United Nations system, contributing to the work and decision-making processes of a number of United Nations fora, while at the same time working to translate UN outcomes into tangible results at the national level. In particular, their participation in United Nations fora:
- brings a unique perspective and experience to the development of global policies and initiatives, thereby supporting efforts to mainstream human rights throughout the United Nations system
- strengthens the institutional linkages between key national, regional and international stakeholders and United Nations agencies
- advances the domestic implementation of international and regional human rights and development initiatives, including by advising on and monitoring the implementation of international obligations at the national level; and
- facilitates greater engagement and cooperation with United Nations agencies that are directly engaged with NHRI s.

The value of the contributions that the ICC, RCCs and Paris Principles-compliant NHRI s make to UN fora has been consistently recognised by the General Assembly, most recently in its resolutions 60/251, 65/28, 66/169, which respectively confirmed and strengthened the contribution opportunities for NHRI s at the Human Rights Council and its mechanisms. Acknowledging the contributions that NHRI s make to other United Nations bodies, the General Assembly in its resolution 66/254 of 16 February 2012 requested that arrangements be made for its open-ended intergovernmental process to strengthen and enhance the effective functioning of the human rights treaty body system to benefit from the inputs and expertise of NHRI s.

In its resolution A/HRC/20/L.15 of 5 July 2012 – co-sponsored by more than 100 States and adopted by consensus – the Human Rights Council took the further step of recommending that the General Assembly enable Paris Principles-compliant NHRI s to participate at the General Assembly, based on practices and arrangements observed at the Human Rights Council.
CONCLUSION

The statements of the General Assembly and the Human Rights Council outlined above consistently recognise the great value that ICC, RCCs and NHRIs add to the United Nations system. It follows that the granting of observer status to the ICC and RCCs would enable the General Assembly and its subordinate bodies to benefit from these contributions. It would also support the implementation of United Nations outcomes in country, augmenting the protection and promotion of human rights in all regions. The granting of the ICC and RCCs observer status at the General Assembly would further underwrite the independent status which the General Assembly had already confirmed when adopting the Paris Principles establishing NHRIs.