

August XX, 2009

H.E. Samuel Lewis-Navarro
Foreign Minister
Ministry of Foreign Affairs
Palacio Bolívar
Calle 3era San Felipe, Panamá 4
Republic of Panama

Your Excellency,

We are writing to encourage your government to present its candidacy to the UN Human Rights Council (HRC) elections that will take place in May 2010. We believe that Panama's membership on the Council will help to ensure that the Group of Latin American and the Caribbean (GRULAC) uses its key position on the Council as a means of demonstrating the region's commitment to human rights promotion.

The U.N. General Assembly resolution establishing the HRC affirmed that only states which themselves uphold the highest standards of human rights are to be elected as members. Panama's support and promotion of human rights both at a national, regional and international level, including its positive role on the Security Council in 2007-2008, and the important role it played in the creation of the Council in 2005-2006, make it a worthy candidate.

The election process outlined by UNGA Resolution 60/251 implies that there should be competitive elections for the Council seats allotted to each regional group, and that the UN General Assembly should vote for candidates based on their commitments to promote and protect human rights. In 2006 GRULAC, like all the other regional groups except one, enjoyed a spirited contest for the available seats. In the past two elections, however, we have been disappointed by the decisions of GRULAC to present the same number of candidates as seats available in their region. We are particularly concerned that this trend may continue this year. Your government's candidacy for the Human Rights Council would reverse this trend and send a signal that GRULAC is committed to competitive elections in which candidates can be judged by their dedication to human rights.

We hope that you will give early consideration to a potential candidacy for the HRC to provide your government ample time to organize a campaign. We believe Panama's record on human rights make it a worthy candidate for the HRC, and its geographic and political position will enable a strong candidacy and a special role as a leader and consensus-builder on the Human Rights Council.

We look forward to a principled election for the two open GRULAC seats. We believe Panama's participation in this process would be an important contribution to the development of the Human Rights Council.

Please accept, Excellency, the assurances of our highest consideration.