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PES Statement in support of the UN Secretary-General's proposal for a UN Human Rights Council

The UN Secretary General, Kofi Annan, presented in March 2005 a report, "In Larger Freedom: towards development, security and human rights for all", setting out his proposals to make the United Nations into a more effective organisation, capable of delivering the objectives of development, security and human rights, established in its founding Charter.

The Member States of the United Nations are now undertaking a process of debate and negotiation on the basis of the Secretary-General's proposals, which will culminate in the UN General Assembly in September 2005.

While it is too early to determine what the outcomes will be of the UN General Assembly, it is clear that the attention of global political debate and public opinion is now firmly turned towards the imperative of UN reform. UN reform is no longer just a subject of inter-governmental negotiation, but of keen interest to the general public and civic movements, particularly in light of international events in the past few years.

The human rights dimension of the UN Secretary-General's reform proposals warrants particular attention and praise. European social democrats believe that there will be neither security nor development on this planet without respect for human rights.

European social democrats believe that the current UN Commission on Human Rights has proved to be an ineffectual and selective mechanism for identifying and condemning human rights abuses across the world.

The present rotational system of the UN Commission enables governments with shameful human rights records, like Sudan and Libya, to gain membership and thereby block attempts to condemn their own records. This has led to the profound credibility deficit of the United Nations in the field of human rights.

European social democrats therefore give their wholehearted support to the UN Secretary-General's proposal to abolish the UN Commission and replace it with a UN Human Rights Council.

We support proposals for a peer review of each country's human rights record to take place every three years, ending the system of country-sponsored resolutions. We also support the proposal to make such a Human Rights Council into a standing body, meeting year-round rather than the current six week term, better enabling it to respond to crises.

European social democrats are committed to engaging in progressive international efforts towards a successful institutional reform of the United Nations in the field of human rights.

We call on the UN General Assembly of September 2005 to take heed of public calls for the establishment of a UN Human Rights Council.