

14th November 2016

To: All Member States' Permanent Representatives to the United Nations in New York and Geneva

Excellency,

We are writing to you in regard to a 'no-action motion' we understand will be introduced on Tuesday 15 November at the UN General Assembly's Third Committee on all country resolutions tabled under agenda item 68(c).

We wish to express our deep concern about such an initiative.

The purposes of the United Nations Charter include encouraging international cooperation and promoting and encouraging respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. The United Nations General Assembly and its Third Committee provide forums for constructive dialogue among Member States on the full range of human rights issues. Member States have the opportunity to express opinion on all draft resolutions tabled for consideration by the Third Committee, which a majority of States then adopt or reject.

Open debate and dialogue is at the heart of this process. Respecting and supporting the right to freedom of expression is essential for the General Assembly to fulfil its mandate.

Procedural approaches – such as 'no-action motions' - should not be employed to stifle important and legitimate discussion. The use of a 'no-action motion' essentially seeks to censor discussion and will be seen as an attempt to avoid important, substantive debates on critical human rights issues and situations.

We urge you to refrain from supporting the use of a 'no-action motion'. The use of a single 'no-action motion' on country resolutions would set a disturbing precedent and signal to individuals around the world that the United Nations is not a place where freedom of expression is respected, nor open debate encouraged.

Sincerely,

African Centre for Democracy and Human Rights Studies (ACDHRS)

Amnesty International

Asian Forum for Human Rights and Development (FORUM-ASIA)

Baha'i International Community

CIVICUS

Committee for Human Rights in North Korea (HRNK)

Conectas Direitos Humanos

DefendDefenders

Human Rights Watch

Impact Iran

International Service for Human Rights

Jacob Blaustein Institute for the Advancement of Human Rights

West African Human Rights Defenders Network (WAHRDN / ROADDH)

The Asian Legal Resource Center

The Egyptian Initiative for Personal Rights

The Global Justice Center