



## **Statement of the NGO Coalition for an Optional Protocol to the ICESCR and the International Network for Economic, Social and Cultural Rights**

The NGO Coalition for an Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), ESCR-Net and participants at the International Strategy meeting on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, representing NGOs, community-based and grassroots organizations globally, warmly welcome the adoption of the Optional Protocol at the General Assembly on 10<sup>th</sup> December 2008. On the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, it is of great significance that victims of violations of economic, social and cultural rights finally have a mechanism, at the international level, through which they can seek effective remedies for human rights violations. We believe this is an essential right of victims of all human rights violations and today, by the adoption of this long awaited instrument, the General Assembly has corrected historic imbalances. We thank the international community for strongly reaffirming the universality, indivisibility and inter-dependence of all human rights.

This achievement today is of momentous importance and represents the end result of the unfailing commitment and dedication of all involved. We once again congratulate the Chair of the Working Group for her untiring determination and perseverance through the process. We particularly acknowledge and thank the large number of States, from all the regional systems, who have supported the Optional Protocol. We thank all involved for their constructive and valuable engagement. We note that the text of the Optional Protocol is the result of co-operation, consensus and concession by all. This Protocol resonates the commitment of States to the development of effective instruments for victims of violations of economic, social and cultural rights as part of a harmonious human rights system within international human rights law.

Millions of persons worldwide have been observing the progress towards the adoption of this Optional Protocol, and they have a stake in the outcome of today's proceedings. We, as part of the global civil society and social movements, celebrate today the great advancement that is being made in the pursuit of the realization of economic, social and cultural rights.

We are however acutely conscious of the need for States to translate their oral commitments to practical reality. We look forward with anticipation to the Optional Protocol being opened for signature March 2009. We urge all States to respond urgently to the calls from civil society, organizations, social movements

and victims of violations to ensure the enforcement of economic, social and cultural rights by becoming parties to this instrument.

Thank you