

May 16, 2003

Dear Sirs,

We write to urge that the current crisis in Zimbabwe receives sufficient attention at the upcoming meeting of G8 countries in Evian, France. The commitment of the G8 to ending serious human rights abuses in Zimbabwe by working alongside African states and institutions is crucial. The resolution of the Zimbabwean crisis is not only a legal and moral imperative, but it also fundamental to the successful implementation of the G8's Africa Action Plan and the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD).

We are pleased to note that monitoring the implementation of the G8 Africa Action Plan, which was adopted at the end of the June 2002 summit held in Kananaskis, Canada, is one of the items on the agenda of your upcoming meeting at Evian. We are also encouraged by President Chirac's proposal to focus on several major themes during the meeting, including the promotion of democracy through dialogue with civil society and other states. The crisis in Zimbabwe is a litmus test for the efficacy of your discussions. The situation in Zimbabwe starkly contradicts the principles contained in NEPAD and supported by the Africa Action Plan. Moreover, Zimbabwean civil society groups are routinely being persecuted, which hampers their efforts to promote respect for human rights and the rule of law.

In the Africa Action Plan, the G8 states pledged their commitment to the principles and objectives contained in NEPAD. Among these are the attainment of sustainable development through good governance, democracy and respect for human rights. The G8 Africa Action Plan describes NEPAD as "a bold and clear-sighted vision of Africa's development" and seeks to encourage "the imaginative effort that underlies [it]." The Plan also refers to NEPAD's peer-review process as an "innovative and potentially decisive element in the attainment of the objectives of the NEPAD." The Plan does not, however, lay out any guidelines for how the G8 states will seek to support the peer-review process and ensure that it indeed fulfils its role as a "decisive element" in ensuring good governance and respect for human rights.

We see the need for an effective peer review process in the implementation of NEPAD that includes independent civil society groups within Africa and rigorously examines states' implementation of internationally recognized human rights standards. (See Lawyers Committee letter to African heads of state, November 13, 2002, attached.) The peer review process should include an examination not only of a state's internal practices and implementation of human rights, but also should assess their policies towards other African states and the consistency of such policies with international human rights obligations.

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We commend the commitment of the G8 states, contained in the Africa Action Plan, to establish enhanced partnerships with African countries whose performance reflects the principles and undertakings contained in NEPAD. In order for this commitment to be fully realized, such enhanced partnerships should be established with countries whose actions *both at home and in their relations with other countries in the region* are reflective of the principles of good governance, democracy and human rights. NEPAD is itself a regional initiative and requires regional vision and implementation, not only domestic policies and practices that conform with its aims.

Many crises of poverty, disease, armed conflict, and denial of democracy and human rights continue to plague Africa and fundamentally undermine efforts to achieve sustainable development. Combating such crises requires effective, co-ordinated strategies among African states and supported by the international community. The current situation in Zimbabwe is one such crisis, the details of which are well-documented by local and international organizations (see Lawyers Committee Briefing Paper for the G8, June 2002). Since your June 2002 meeting, the situation in Zimbabwe has further deteriorated, and it is largely the black population that is targeted for abuse. Serious human rights violations committed by the government and its agents continue to receive insufficient attention both within the region and internationally. Efforts to end the crisis must involve the combined efforts of governments and civil society groups in Africa which are encouraged by the G8. Fundamental human rights issues must be addressed, including bringing an end to political violence, arbitrary detention and torture, restoring full freedom of expression and association, ensuring the independence of the judiciary, and combating impunity for human rights abuses.

The very fundamental challenges to NEPAD presented by the Zimbabwe crisis and the response to it, and the creation of viable regional mechanisms to enhance respect for human rights in Africa must be prioritized at the G8 meeting. We would greatly appreciate your action in this regard and any information that you can provide to us in response to our concerns.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mike Posner". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Michael Posner
Executive Director