

UN Reform: Human Rights

In September 2005, world leaders agreed to establish a stronger, more effective UN Human Rights Council to replace the UN Commission on Human Rights. The concept for the Council was originally proposed by Secretary-General Kofi Annan in his March 2005 report, *In Larger Freedom: Towards Security, Development and Human Rights for All*. Below is a comparison of the design of the existing Commission with the framework for the new Human Rights Council as proposed by the President of the UN General Assembly in February 2006.

ISSUE	COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS	HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL
Size and Election		
Election Process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Commission members are elected by the 54 members of the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) of the UN General Assembly. ▪ There is no vote in election to the Commission; members are selected by groups and elected by acclamation. ▪ A simple majority through acclamation is necessary for election. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Council members are elected by all of the 191 members of the UN General Assembly. ▪ All Council members must stand for real elections, by individual and direct vote. ▪ An absolute majority of the General Assembly (96 votes) is necessary for election to the Council.
Size of Body	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The total size of the Commission is 53 members. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The total size of the Council is 47 members.
Membership		
Criteria for candidates	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ There are no criteria for Commission candidates. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Candidates to the Council must have made contributions to the promotion and protection of human rights. ▪ Council candidates must also demonstrate voluntary pledges and commitments.
Suspension of members	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The Commission does not have a method to suspend members. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ A 2/3 majority vote can suspend privileges and rights of members who commit gross and systematic human rights violations.
Change in membership		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ New members will be elected to the Council in May 2006.
Scrutiny of the entire membership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ There is no review process for the Commission's membership. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ A process for the universal periodic review of Council members will be developed in the Council's first year.
Term limits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The Commission's members are not term limited. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Council members may not serve more than two consecutive terms of three years each.
Sessions and Activities		
Duration and Number of Meetings Annually	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The Commission meets once annually for a duration of 6 weeks. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The Council has no fewer than three meetings annually, with a duration of no less than 10 weeks

		total.
Working agenda	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The agenda includes Item 8 which targets Israel. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The Council's activities will commence with a clean slate.
Requirement for special emergency sessions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ A majority of Commission members are required for special emergency sessions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Only 1/3 of Council members are required to hold a special emergency session.
Future Improvement		
Commitments of members	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Commission members have no specific commitments. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Council members must uphold the highest standards in the promotion and protection of human rights and must fully cooperate with the Council. ▪ All members are reviewed by the universal review mechanism during their term of membership.
Special mechanisms for review of body's activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The Commission has no special mechanisms for review beyond its existing framework. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The Council will conduct a comprehensive review of its activities one year after its first session.