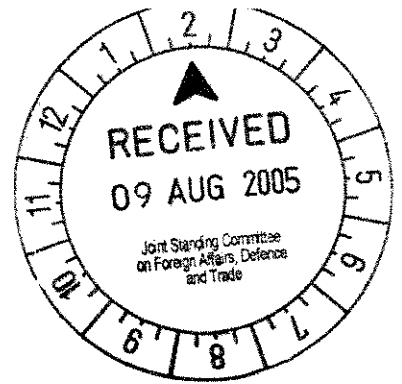




Submission No 2

Roundtable on the Reform of the UN Commission on Human Rights

Name: Claire Stoddart



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Senator Marise Payne
C/O- Sara Edson
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Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade
Suite R1-125
The Commonwealth Parliament
Parliament House
Canberra, ACT 2600

9/8/05

Re: Observations of the United Nations Commission on Human Rights and reflection on it's proposed reform

Dear Marise,

Thanks for the invitation to attend the roundtable discussions on the subject of the reform of the United Nations Commission on Human Rights. Unfortunately I cannot attend due to compulsory training with my new employer.

I have followed the issue of the reform of the CHR with great interest and thoroughly enjoyed the Secretary Generals address on the subject during this year's commission, which I attended as an intern with the Australian delegation. Below I have noted some of my opinions on the proposed reforms and I have included some of my observations on the workings of the commission. Feel free to draw upon them if they are of any relevance to your work.

I am in support of the Secretary Generals criticism of the CHR as being overly politicised and selective in its approach to international human rights issues. It was evident in this year's commission that some states were scrutinised more closely than others and that political alliances prevailed rather than close and independent analysis of the agenda items.

What was of great concern to me throughout the commission was the constant criticism of the UN and its mechanisms by participating states. Often this was used to justify their non-compliance with UN treaties and to deflect attention from their national human rights violations. This constant criticism also confused important issues and detracted from their significance, I believe this was a planned and deliberate tactic. One example of this was Israel's condemnation of the CHR and its

mandates and its non-cooperation in negotiations aimed at the resolution of conflicts with Palestine.

The permanent standing of the proposed human rights council would be more effective, than the temporary and limited time frame of the current commission. The meeting was too short to allow for close analysis of such broad issues, however it was too long for a single event. Its length and broad scope sometimes created a disinterested and restless atmosphere during meetings and plenary sessions.

The ineffectiveness of multilateralism in conflict resolution was also apparent throughout the commission. States often became defensive when international conflicts were investigated through such means. I believe the new council could achieve better results in conflict resolution when dealing with states on a one to one basis, as suggested in the reform proposals of the Secretary General.

Thanks once again Marise, for taking the initiative to convene such an essential and potentially productive meeting. I am interested in the outcomes and would appreciate being sent any follow up documentation.

With best regards,

Clare Stoddart
Intern
Australian Delegation
United Nations Commission on Human Rights
Geneva, April 2005