

United Nations Member States today overwhelmingly approved the establishment of a new Human Rights Council, aiming to strengthen the world bodys machinery to promote and protect fundamental rights, and deal with major human rights offenders.

Adopting a resolution by a recorded vote of 170 in favour to 4 against (Israel, Marshall Islands, Palau, United States), with 3 abstentions (Belarus, Iran, Venezuela), the General Assembly decided to set up the new Council to replace the Geneva-based Commission on Human Rights, which has come under fire for excessive politicization. (For details of the vote, see Annex.)

Over objections from the United States that the resolution did not go far enough to exclude some of the worlds worst human rights abusers from membership in the new body, the 191-member Assembly approved the text, which decided embers elected to the Council shall uphold the highest standards in the promotion and protection of human rights, fully cooperate with the Council, and be reviewed under the universal periodic review mechanism, during their term of membership.

The resolution calls for the election of new Council members on 9 May 2006, and an inaugural meeting on 19 June. The Commission, which postponed its annual meeting earlier this week, awaiting a decision on the new Council in New York, will be abolished on June 16. The 47 members would be individually elected by an absolute majority of 96 votes of the General Assemblys members. If the Council members failed to uphold high human rights standards, they could be suspended by a two-thirds majority vote by Assembly members present at the meeting.

()

<http://www.un.org/News/Press/docs/2006/ga10449.doc.htm>