

# 2010 Washington Human Rights Summit

## Plan of Action

### Headline Action Points for the United States Government

February 22, 2010



*Human rights defenders from more than two dozen countries met in Washington between February 17–19, 2010 and produced the following action plan in two parts: these headline action points for the United States government; and a fuller Plan of Action directed to the U.S. government, other governments, multilateral organizations and civil society organizations.*

#### ***Introduction***

Recognizing that its human rights practices have a far-reaching global impact, the U.S. government must abide by its commitments to safeguard universal human rights. The United States should prioritize support for and protection of human rights defenders in its foreign policy by emphasizing the promotion of the basic freedoms of expression and association through its policies and activities around the world.

To that end the U.S. government should:

#### ***Policy Formulation***

- Ensure that advancing human rights, including the protection of the freedoms of association and expression, are operationalized through a National Security Presidential Directive or some comparable mechanism, and properly resourced.
- Ensure that the promotion of freedoms of association and expression are included in a national foreign assistance strategy.
- Strengthen the U.S. Guiding Principles on Non-Governmental Organizations (issued in 2006) by developing them into action guidelines for embassies, missions and other U.S. diplomatic representatives around the world.
- Formulate a strategy to promote freedom of expression in countries where it is under threat and fulfill its pledge to make Internet freedom an international priority.
- Facilitate, support and strengthen engagement by independent civil society organizations in regional and sub-regional multilateral bodies.
- Combat terrorism and violent extremism by promoting more human rights, not less.

### ***Diplomatic Engagement***

- Ensure that consistent human rights and democracy messages are conveyed in bilateral discussions at all levels and in all areas.
- When establishing bi-lateral structures to deal with human rights issues, include local civil society activists in their development and functioning.
- In countries where freedoms of association and expression are curtailed, ensure that embassies and missions have a plan of action for supporting independent civil society organizations (CSOs), media and human rights defenders. This includes, but is not limited to:
  - Convening regular meetings and building relationships with human rights defenders and journalists to show support for their work and remaining engaged in their efforts;
  - Monitoring trials of human rights defenders.
- Engage with other countries in order to counter government initiatives that threaten freedoms of association and expression in multilateral bodies.
- Lead multilateral efforts to promote a single Internet and end censorship.

### ***Foreign assistance***

- Ensure that the integrity and independence of U.S. government assistance is maintained. In those countries where restrictions exist on providing international aid to independent CSOs, the U.S. government should devise strategies for assisting civil society, and should register its objections with the host country's government. The U.S. government should not acquiesce to the demands of other governments to vet or restrict U.S. foreign assistance to CSOs.
- Remove onerous U.S. conditions on foreign assistance that jeopardize freedom of association and undermine CSOs.
- Provide direct support to human rights defenders to participate in multilateral, regional and sub-regional human rights mechanisms.