



**pwescr**  
Programme on Women's Economic  
Social and Cultural Rights

To,  
The President  
The Human Rights Council  
United Nations  
Geneva

September 18, 2007

Mr. President:

We wish to bring to your attention the critical issue of livelihoods, which is not adequately addressed by current UN system including Special Procedures. The right to livelihood is identified as a key right to the realization of all other rights. Livelihoods for people are a means to live a life with dignity.

Livelihoods of people are being threatened in various ways: Several development projects such as dams and extractive activities result in mass displacements, environmental degradation and the destruction of natural resources. In addition, sustainable forms of agriculture are disappearing, and so are traditional forms of sustenance. As a result, people, especially women including women from marginalized communities such as Dalits, indigenous are daily pushed away from self-reliant sources of livelihood to welfare dependency and poverty.

International human rights instruments recognize the right to adequate standard of living, including right to food and housing, the right to work, the right to social security and the right to health. While the protection and promotion of these rights may to a certain extent afford minimum protection of people's livelihood, still there are protection gaps. In most circumstances, issues connected with livelihood security are not sufficiently addressed.

We therefore request the Human Rights Council in its effort to improve human rights protection to take note of this gap in the human rights system, and to explore ways in which the right to livelihood and related human rights violations can be recognized and addressed. In this regard we would like to suggest that the Human Rights Council requests the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights to conduct a study to examine the scope and content of the right to livelihood. In light of the review of Special Procedure mandates that the Human Rights Council is undertaking, we would also suggest the Council to examine the possibility of creating a mandate addressing the right to livelihood.

We thank you for your kind consideration and look forward to your response.

Yours sincerely,

Priti Darooka  
(Executive Director)

Cc:  
UN High Commissioner for Human Rights  
Special Rapporteurs