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**Promotion and protection of all human rights, civil,
political, economic, social and cultural rights,
including the right to development**

Written statement* submitted by the Servas International, a non-governmental organization on the roster

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[22 August 2013]

* This written statement is issued, unedited, in the language(s) received from the submitting non-governmental organization(s).

Peace through cross-cultural understanding

Servas International is a non-governmental organization founded in 1949, serving tolerance and mutual understanding in more than 100 countries of the world until the present day. “Servas” means “to serve” in Esperanto. Our name shows our daily dedication. We support the exchange of people of all ages, genders and origins to fight prejudices and to establish eternal and unlimited friendships. From Canada to China, from Syria to Brazil, from Egypt to South Africa, from Sweden to India. Servas International is a global peace federation that consists of national member groups and individuals, present in almost every corner of the world. We achieve the implementation of Art. 2 of the Declaration on a culture of peace (A/RES/53/243). According to this article, progress in the fuller development of a culture of peace comes about through values, attitudes, modes of behavior and ways of life conducive to the promotion of peace among individuals, groups and nations.

Servas International promotes values for a world where people can live in peaceful coexistence thanks to respect and understanding of different cultures, genders, skin color, ideology and nationality. The essential tool for promoting peace is the Servas program for hospitality and hospitality exchange. There is a high need of organizations promoting intercultural and cross-border understanding between all people of the world as the number of voluntary and involuntary travelers, regarding refugees and tourists, increases. For this reason it is the ambition of the President of Servas International, Mr. Jonny Sägänger, that Servas International will be the preferred choice when in the field of world peace, Human Rights, sustainable development and environmental protection, hospitality exchange is desired by any organization or individual person. Servas International runs also peace projects, workshops and other initiatives promoting peace and tolerance.

Human Rights needs protection from the whole international community. We congratulate all states that are on the way to implement Human Rights completely in the daily life of their citizens. Working and living conditions are affected by good governance and good governance has to respect Human Rights. Every democratic elected government has its special responsibility to grant an atmosphere of equality and respect to its citizens but also to everybody that enjoys a visit in your respectable country.

Servas International works since 1949 in the field of individual exchanges. Those exchanges facilitate more than any other measures of informal learning the possibility to discover the unknown. Visiting people from other backgrounds leads to a better understanding and shows the one and only truth: We are one global community; We are one global society!

For this reason we ask you all to enable the possibility of free travel to every region of your countries. We also want to encourage you to support the civil society groups that are connecting people from all continents of the world, as we are convinced that only a global teamwork can lead to enduring peace, as the United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon said it in his video message on the occasion of World Humanitarian day.

The world has to cope with many problems. There are too many armed conflicts in the world, that threaten world peace. We want to express our never ending hope, that all parties come to the result that violence cannot lead to peace.

In particular we would like to remember the situation in Egypt and Syria. It is our wish to express our deep sympathy with all those who strive for peace in regions that are facing violence. We strongly regret that our exchange programs decreased in those regions, and we urge you all to help to re-establish the possibility to host and to travel safely, so that the idea of mutual understanding has the possibility to grow everywhere. We are convinced that there is no space for discrimination. Neither for religious nor for gender issues. An

uprising of religious intolerance has to be prevented. Racism is threatening the world peace and we all have to do our best to free us from this threat. Only peace and tolerance improve our global community. Only peace and tolerance prepare us for the next centuries to come.

We also remember that more frequently, natural disasters appear and make people suffer. Servas International draws the attention on those regions. We feel affected by every natural disaster, because we are aligned with the people there due to our Servas International network.

While housing can be provided by the construction of homes, Human Rights need much more than the elaboration of laws guaranteeing them. They must be supported by the government and the civil society to become the reason of state. For this reason the promotion of non-governmental organizations dealing with the ideal of global peace has to be subsidized consequently by the international community. Only together, we can reach the goal of tolerance and peace. Non-governmental organizations have usually a strong background of experience and a network that helps to reach a huge number of global citizens. Servas International for example disposes such a network. For political reasons we are convinced that there is no doubt that an ideal promoted by the civil society reaches more people than if it is only promoted by a government.

Servas International welcomes all kind of efforts taken by the international community helping people to get to know the unknown neighbor. This is the way we can spread our wish to global peace.

We express our never ending hope that together we will reach the goal of a peaceful world and we invite all of you to share this hope. By contrast we strongly condemn all kind of violence and terrorism. The threat of international and national terrorism is more dangerous than ever. Nevertheless, this shall not lead to even more severe laws that limit the rights of citizens. Formal and informal education on Human Rights is the key to mutual understanding, and mutual understanding is the tool to brake the chains of terrorism. We all share this opinion with you who stated the essential Declaration on Human Rights Education and Training (A/Res/66/137).

We all know that there will be no peace without respect for human rights.

As a non-governmental organization, Servas International is a representative of the civil society. For this reason and thanks to our experiences in the field of peace building through tolerance and mutual understanding, we encourage you, Excellencies, Distinguished Representatives, to do your best to support the implementation of Human Rights in your field of responsibility and to assist others on their way to rule of law.