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IMPLEMENTATION OF GENERAL ASSEMBLY RESOLUTION 60/251 OF 15 MARCH 2006 ENTITLED “HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL”

**Written statement* submitted by the Society for Threatened Peoples, a non-
governmental organization in special consultative status**

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

[27 February 2007]

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

Russian Federation: Human Rights Situation in Chechnya, Xenophobia in Russia

The second war in the Chechen Republic of the Russian Federation has played an integral role in the rollback of human rights in Vladimir Putin's Russia and has affected its political trajectory, helping to strengthen those in favour of authoritarianism. The war and the concomitant impunity led to a rise of terrorism and racially motivated hate crimes not only in Chechnya, but also in the neighbouring republics and the Russian Federation.

In the meantime, the war in Chechnya continues and spreads into the neighbouring republics. Society for Threatened Peoples is appalled by the failure of international human rights mechanisms regarding this war which has amounted to the most severe and longest human rights crisis on European ground, leaving every eighth Chechen dead and nearly half of the population as internally displaced persons (IDPs) or refugees in other countries, especially in Europe. Even though the situation stabilized in 2006, the Society for Threatened Peoples continues to receive reports about shelling of the mountain districts, arbitrary disappearances of people and impunity for a variety of human rights violations by security forces, Russian and Chechen alike. The appointment of Ramzan Kadyrow as acting president by Russian president Vladimir Putin in mid February 2007 raises no hopes. His militia, the so called Kadyrovtsy is notorious for human rights violations in the republic. The smaller number of disappearances is partly explained by the fact that people are too afraid of the authorities and do not report the abduction of a relative any more. An atmosphere of fear is reigning Chechnya.

The Russian Federation is going through rapid growth of aggressive Russian nationalism. Ethnic xenophobia increased dramatically. The majority of Russian citizens share xenophobic views. On the other hand, populist nationalism and an explicit neo-Nazi movement are on the raise. According to the Sova Center for Information and Analysis based in Moscow, the number of racially motivated attacks on people from the Caucasus region, Central Asia and dark-skinned persons increased dramatically over the course of the last couple of years. In 2006 alone, 44 people were killed and 395 injured. Violence has become increasingly demonstrative. Murders in dark alleys are replaced by murders in public places in broad daylight. The number of hate crimes is highest in Moscow and St. Petersburg. With regard to the victims, one can state that only dark skinned people who are relatively rare in Russia and highly noticeable have a higher risk of being targeted than people for the Caucasus and Central Asia. Increasingly, though, also anti-fascists, punks, rappers and anti-racism activists become victims of attacks. Even though the Russian law enforcement agencies make an effort to get a hold on the perpetrators, there still is some degree of impunity. It also seems as if court sentences do not stop the xenophobic groups from action against their victims.

In October, during the conflict between Russia and Georgia, an anti-Georgian campaign was launched in many regions of Russia and openly supported by the authorities. Georgians were subjected to unlawful mass checks, detained by Russian police and deported to Georgia. People were detained right on the street, they were gathered in large groups, delivered to courts where the decision was taken to deport them to Georgia in great numbers. The trials were not conducted in accordance with international law. Quite the contrary, the people subjected to these measures were not allowed to enter the trial rooms but were sometimes kept in cars. The courts as a rule never considered the circumstances of the case and sometimes even ignored the fact that the person in question was married to a

Russian national, had children who grew up in Russia and above all might not have committed any offences which would allow for expulsion. In one case, one of the deportees, an 18-year-old son of a Russian citizen, recently graduated from a school in Moscow. He was brought to Russia when he was five and does not speak Georgian. He was detained in the street together with his mother, a Georgian citizen, and was immediately taken to court where they were not allowed to say a single word. His mother was deported to a Center for women while his father is desperately looking for some relatives who would shelter his family in Georgia. With this action and the expulsion and harassment of Georgian nationals in Russia, domestic Russian and international law were seriously violated.

As a consequence, Russian law makers decided on a new migration law which came into effect on January 15, 2007. Its aim is to reduce the number of illegal migrants from working on Russian markets and bazaars to zero by December 2007. These migrants make up a high percentage of labor force in Russia. They fear an increase in arbitrary document checks and harassment by Russian police. Society for Threatened Peoples fears that more and more people with a “non-Russian” background will become victims of racism and xenophobia which are deeply rooted in Russian society. Measures need to be taken by Russian authorities, media and civil society in order to effectively cope with this severe problem.

Society for Threatened Peoples calls on the Council to:

- learn from past experiences and decide on a resolution condemning Russian politics, especially impunity and the severe violations human rights that occur in the Chechen Republic and condemning the public campaign against Georgian nationals,
- enable the UN special procedures like the special rapporteurs to visit the Republic and thereby start a monitoring process breaking down the information blockade which is still in place in Chechnya.
