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Press Statement

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UNITED NATIONS INTERNATIONAL DAY FOR PEACE AND RESPONSIBILITY TO PROTECT (R2P)

The IHRHL wishes to join millions of peoples all over the world today, who are using the opportunity provided by the UN World Peace Day, to draw attention to the devastating effects of internal and international conflicts, on the livelihood of peoples and their environment. It is also an opportunity to call on the Federal Government of Nigeria, specifically, and African governments in general to urgently embrace the new international norm of Responsibility to Protect – also known as R2P. A norm to ensure action – as opposed to inaction - in cases of corruption with impunity, small arms proliferation, politically motivated violence, deliberately inflicted poverty, cases of genocide, ethnic cleansing and massive human rights violations.

Today the Niger Delta region of Nigeria is blighted by corruption, conflict, poor economic growth, low public spending, poor rights records and low level of child welfare. This devastating effect results from 'resource curse' in an environment where oil and gas generate enormous wealth. In an environment where unaccountable elites divert resources for private gain, negligible investment in basic services such as health, education and sanitation results in infant deaths from easily treatable illnesses such as diarrhea. The children, their mothers and youths who work the streets without jobs bear the brunt of the resulting destruction and displacement. The frustrations that result find expressions in internecine conflicts.

The IHRHL wishes therefore, to draw the attention of the Nigerian government at all levels, to their fundamental obligation under the Nigerian Constitution, in regard to the protection of lives and property of its citizens. Right to life and human security makes no meaning in an environment fraught with lack of transparency, accountability, participation, sustainable development, mass youth unemployment, and poverty.

At the regional and sub-regional levels, in the face of the carnage and barbarism being displayed by the government of Sudan in Darfur region of that country; the IHRHL wishes to remind African governments of their **Responsibility to Protect** under the African Union Constitutive Act, which puts the interest of people at the centre of its goals. One of its main objectives is to "achieve greater unity and solidarity between the African Countries and the peoples of Africa. In West Africa, the ECOWAS Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management, Resolution, Peacekeeping and Security establishes an early warning system for preventing conflicts and a system of collective political or military interventions, including where conflicts or other tensions could lead to serious humanitarian disasters.

Finally, the IHRHL noting seriously that Nigeria and Africa today are substantially a disaster, occasioned by massive human rights violations, calls on civil society organizations, professional groups, trade unions, and individuals, to take such actions, which should include conscientization, mobilization and mass rallies, as to ensure that governments at all levels in Nigeria, take their **responsibility to protect** the entire population seriously, in accordance with the agreement of World leaders at the UN Reform Summit of September, 2005; especially at a

time in the life of this country, when the revered office of the Presidency has been desecrated and wrecked by greed, stealing of public monies and primitive accumulation of wealth at the detriment of the livelihood of the peoples, by the President and his Vice.

That in the face of illiberalism and outright tyranny of civilian rulership since May 1999 in Nigeria; genocide and crimes against humanity in Darfur; the international community, through the United Nations, must invoke its **Responsibility to Protect** and use appropriate diplomatic, humanitarian and other peaceful means to help protect populations from corruption with impunity, mass poverty deliberately inflicted by armed robbery governments, genocide, national displacements, war crimes, ethnic cleansing, religious violence, envirocide, and crimes against humanity.

We urge for peace based on respect for the fundamental rights and freedoms of citizens and populations in Nigeria, Africa and the entire global village.