**Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights**

The Commissioner for Human Rights is an independent and impartial non-judicial institution within the Council of Europe, mandated to promote awareness of and respect for human rights in the 47 member states. The Office of the Commissioner for Human Rights was established in 1999 (Resolution (99) 50). The activities of the Commissioner focus on three major, closely related areas: a system of country visits and dialogue with national authorities and civil society; thematic reporting and advising on the systematic implementation of human rights; and awareness-raising activities. The Commissioner carries out visits to member states to monitor and evaluate the human rights situation. These are focused visits for defining key problems and issuing precise recommendations. In the course of the visits, he meets with the highest representatives of government, parliament, the judiciary, civil society and national human rights structures. He also talks to ordinary people with human rights concerns, and visits places of human rights relevance, including prisons, psychiatric hospitals, centres for asylum seekers, schools, orphanages and settlements populated by vulnerable groups. Further to the visits, country-specific reports are published and the implementation of the recommendations is monitored as part of an ongoing, balanced dialogue with all member states.

In order to provide advice and information on the protection of human rights and the prevention of violations, the Commissioner may release opinions and other thematic documents regarding specific human rights issues. The Commissioner also promotes awareness of human rights in Council of Europe member states by organising and taking part in seminars and events on various human rights themes. He further contributes to the debate and the reflection on current and important human rights matters through the publication of periodic articles and Issue Papers. The Commissioner pays specific attention to the defence of human rights and engages in close co-operation with national human rights structures.

Since the entry into force of Protocol No. 14 to the European Convention on Human Rights, the Commissioner has the right to intervene ex officio as a third party in the Court’s proceedings, by submitting written comments and taking part in hearings. The Commissioner’s activity also contributes to the early solution of emerging crises or to post-conflict reconstruction efforts.

The Commissioner’s status as an independent institution within the Council ofEurope allows him a unique flexibility to work with other institutions, including human rights monitoring mechanisms and intergovernmental and parliamentary committees. The Commissioner co-operates with all of the Council of Europe bodies and with a broad range of international institutions, most importantly the United Nations and its specialised offices, the European Union and the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE).

Internet: http://www.commissioner.coe.int/