London, 10th October 2007

ERT welcomes new British equality body

Dear Mr Phillips,

The Equal Rights Trust welcomes the establishment of the Commission for Equality and Human Rights. The need for a central independent and influential organisation to provide guidance and authority on non-discrimination and human rights has long been recognised in Britain.

The Equal Rights Trust, launched in January 2007, is a new international non-governmental organisation which promotes equality and non-discrimination as a fundamental human right and a basic principle of social justice. ERT will act as a resource, advocacy and research centre for a broad international audience, including lawyers, parliamentarians, policy makers, as well as the general public. We plan to focus our work on the complex nature of discrimination in its varied and multi-faceted forms and to reassert the centrality of the right to equality in the human rights framework, both theoretically and in practical terms.

ERT views the establishment of the CEHR as a unique opportunity, not only to combat existing forms of discrimination but also tackle subtle and emerging practices which perpetuate social injustice. With just under ten years since the enactment of the Human Rights Act and the current legislative developments underway to adopt a Single Equality Act, the new Commission is ideally placed to act as a protagonist to redress and ultimately prevent all forms of unlawful discrimination. We further expect that the CESR will be – as indicated by its name – a manifestation of the indivisibility and interrelatedness of equality and other fundamental rights.

We wish to see the CEHR as a potential model at the European and international stage. The relatively advanced debate in Britain on equality means that the institutions and mechanisms to address discrimination are an important source of reference and best practices for people abroad. In the legal and policy field, the CEHR benefits from more than thirty years of developing anti-discrimination law and practice in this country. We trust the CEHR will make the most of its international responsibility in this regard. We will seek to engage with you and your colleagues, with the aim of promoting and
improving international standards on equality. We expect that the CEHR will keep its door open for international exchange, including with states beyond the European Union, and ensure that anyone, particularly those who are the most disadvantaged or who suffer the worst forms of discrimination around the world, can learn from British experience.

Sincerely,

Dr Dimitrina Petrova, Executive Director, The Equal Rights Trust