



Honourable Pablo Rodríguez
Minister of Canadian Heritage and Multiculturalism
15 Eddy Street
Gatineau, Quebec
K1A 0M5

December 10, 2018

Dear Minister Rodríguez,

Attached please find a joint letter endorsed by 26 Indigenous peoples' organizations and civil society groups who participated in last year's historic FPT Human Rights Ministerial meeting. We are writing with three recommendations for immediate next steps in implementing the important commitments that were made by Ministers one year ago.

We would welcome an opportunity to meet with you to discuss this important agenda further at your earliest convenience. Arrangements for a delegation of our organizations to meet with you can be made through my Executive Assistant, Thomas Ndayiragije, at tndayiragije@amnesty.ca or by phone at 613 744 7667 ext 263.

Sincerely,

Alex Neve
Secretary General
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Honourable Pablo Rodríguez
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Dear Minister Rodríguez,

As the world marks the 70th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights on December 10th, International Human Rights Day, we are writing in follow-up to important commitments that federal, provincial and territorial ministers responsible for human rights made at their historic meeting last year, at the time of the 69th anniversary.

As you will be aware, your predecessor, Minister Joly, along with your colleague, Minister of Justice Jody Wilson-Raybould, co-chaired and co-hosted that much-anticipated meeting, the first to be held in 29 years. It provided a long overdue opportunity, in particular, to address significant gaps and weaknesses in Canada's approach to ensuring that all governments work together in a coordinated, transparent and accountable manner to deliver effective implementation of Canada's international human rights obligations. This is a shortcoming in Canada's human rights record long-signalled to be of serious concern by UN human rights bodies, other governments, Canadian parliamentary committees, Indigenous organizations and civil society.

Our organizations appreciated the opportunity to engage with ministers at last year's meeting in a session at which we were able to offer a broad overview of numerous areas in which Canada falls short of complying with our international human rights obligations and to lay out recommendations for a significantly strengthened approach. We welcomed the commitments that were made at the close of the meeting, notably:

- to hold future FPT Human Rights Ministerial meetings;
- to enhance FPT collaboration through a senior level mechanism;
- to modernize the mandate of the intergovernmental Continuing Committee of Officials on Human Rights;
- to develop a protocol for following on the recommendations that Canada receives from international human rights bodies; and
- to develop a stakeholder engagement strategy.

Minister, one year later we are disappointed that there has not yet been significant progress with respect to these very important commitments. As such, we are writing at this time, in follow up to your recent letter of December 3, 2018 to us, with three requests.

First, in our view the commitment to developing a stakeholder engagement strategy is, in many respects, foundational to all of the other commitments. And clearly a stakeholder engagement strategy must be developed through a process that centrally engages with stakeholders. That has not yet happened. We urge you to make this a priority and to devote adequate and dedicated resources to ensuring that stakeholders will be able to participate meaningfully.

Second, we are very much of the view that in order to maintain the momentum coming out of last year's meeting, FPT Ministerial Human Rights meetings must occur at regular intervals. In our follow up letter to Ministers Joly and Wilson-Raybould dated 23 January 2018 (a copy of which is attached and to which we have never received a response) we urged that the next meeting be scheduled one year later, to coincide with the 70th anniversary of the Universal Declaration. While that has obviously not happened, we urge you to work with federal, provincial and territorial colleagues to agree to an early date for the next meeting, which we strongly recommend take place in 2019.

Finally, we would welcome an opportunity for a delegation from our organizations to meet with you personally, at your earliest convenience. While you were not involved in the 2017 meeting, you do now have the responsibility – and also the tremendous opportunity – to advance this very important agenda. We would like to share our perspective and experience as to why this is so important and how we can work together to continue with the progress that is sorely needed.

Sincerely,

Action Canada for Sexual Health and Rights
Amnesty International Canada (English Branch)
Amnistie internationale Canada francophone
British Columbia Aboriginal Network on Disability Society
Canada Without Poverty
Canadian Association of Black Lawyers
Canadian Association of Refugee Lawyers
Canadian Association for Community Living
Canadian Coalition for the Rights of Children
Canadian Council for Refugees
Centre for Israel and Jewish Affairs
Chinese and Southeast Asian Legal Clinic
Colour of Poverty – Colour of Change
Congress of Aboriginal Peoples
Council of Canadians with Disabilities
DisAbled Women's Network of Canada (DAWN)
Egale
Feminist Alliance for International Action
Femmes Autochtones du Québec / Québec Native Women
Les Femmes Michif Otipemisiwak / Women of the Metis Nation
National Council of Canadian Muslims
Ontario Council of Agencies Serving Immigrants
Pauktuutit Inuit Women of Canada
Social Rights Advocacy Centre
South Asian Legal Clinic of Ontario
Women's Legal Education and Action Fund