

list of women honored by the ABA Commission on Women in the Profession with its Margaret Brent Women Lawyer of Achievement Award. This award, first bestowed in 1991, "honors outstanding women lawyers who have achieved professional excellence in their area of specialty and have actively paved the way to success for others."

Special Award Honoree Senator Clinton served as the first chairman of the

ABA Women's Commission in 1988. After graduating from Yale Law School, Senator Clinton joined the Rose Law Firm as one of its first women associates in 1976. In 1978, President Carter appointed her to the board of the Legal Services Corporation. She served for twelve years as First Lady of Arkansas and for eight years as First Lady of the United States. She was appointed by her husband to chair the Task Force on National Health Care Reform. Congress rejected her plan in 1994, and further plans

for reform were abandoned. In 1995, she led the American delegation to a United Nations Conference on Women in Beijing, China. In 1996, the First Lady authored *It Takes a Village and Other Lessons Children Teach Us*. In 2000, she was elected to the U.S. Senate in New York.

On Senator Clinton's webpage, she lists her priorities when it comes to women's issues. She writes, "I continue to press for equal rights for girls and women by fight-

ABA TASK FORCE ON UN HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION RELEASES REPORT

In June, the American Bar Association's Board of Governors adopted recommendations offered by the ABA Section of International Law's Task Force on Reform of the United Nations Commission on Human Rights. The recommendations urge fundamental reform of the process by which the United Nations addresses human rights.

The ABA Task Force, established in January of 2004, conducted monthly meetings last year at which it heard testimony from a wide variety of government officials, think tanks, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), and former U.S. Ambassadors to the Commission. The witnesses all agreed on the need to reform the Human Rights Commission, finding that it failed to fulfill its mission to promote and protect human rights. The primary cause of that failure, according to the Task Force, "is the increasingly politicized nature of the Commission, which has severely compromised the capacity of the Commission to take action in response to serious human rights violations." In particular, the ABA Task Force report severely criticized the Commission for failing to adopt a resolution condemning the genocide in Sudan.

The Commission's membership includes many countries with questionable human rights records, including Bhutan, China, Cuba, Egypt, Eritrea, Mauritania, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, Swaziland, Togo, and Zimbabwe. In 2001, United States was voted off the Commission though it has since rejoined. In 2003, the Commission was chaired by Libya.

The ABA Task Force concluded other aspects of the U.N. Human Rights

Commission also hindered its effectiveness, including its large size, its status as a subsidiary of the Economic and Social Council, and its restricted meeting schedule.

The Task Force proposed replacing the Commission on Human Rights with a Human Rights Council. The proposed Council would have the status, size, and discretion necessary to fulfill its responsibilities as the leading human rights inter-governmental body in the U.N. structure. While the ABA Task Force agreed with some recommendations of reform recently suggested by the U.N. Secretary General, it rejected and modified others.

The ABA proposed that the Council should be a standing body of the U.N., with fewer members than the current Commission. The Council members would be elected by the General Assembly subject to a two-thirds majority. The Council should adopt a Code of Conduct under which members would pledge to honor their human rights obligations and to cooperate fully with the Commission's investigations.

The Task Force recommends guidelines designed to focus its mission on fundamental human rights and the rule of law, to promote responsible behavior by Member States, to strengthen the role of the Democracy Caucus of Member States, and to enhance the professionalism of the investigative processes.

To strengthen the new Council's investigatory processes, the Task Force specifically recommends that the capacity and credibility of rapporteurs should be strengthened through the expansion and updating of professional rosters, training

manuals, and the use of common investigative protocols. The Council should allow ample time for rapporteurs to present their reports. The rules of the complaint procedure should be revised to promote greater transparency.

The Task Force proposes reforms to enrich the contribution of the High Commissioner for Human Rights by enhancing its effectiveness. The Task Force recommends that the special rapporteurs be required to present their reports to the High Commissioner immediately after completion rather than on an annual basis. The Task Force also recommends that the High Commissioner produces and circulates up-to-date compilations of the rapporteurs' findings well in advance of each session of the Council and that the High Commissioner be empowered to present a rapporteur's report to the U.N. Security Council in cases of an imminent human rights crisis.

Finally, the Task Force proposes enhancing the role and contributions of NGOs. To facilitate NGO communication and interaction, the Council should appoint a coordinator and remove the strict requirements governing NGO speaking time during meetings.

Despite its criticisms, the Task Force recognizes that the Commission has done important work in exposing cases of serious human rights violations and hopes that reforms to the Commission will only make it more effective, particularly in addressing countries with poor human rights records.