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**Acceptance speech of the signatories' representative of *Charter 08* at
the occasion of receiving the *Homo Homini Award***

Prague, March 11, 2009

Mr. Representative of People in Need,
Your Excellency, Mr. Vaclav Havel,
Respected Minister of Foreign Affairs,
Respected Ministers,
Ladies and Gentlemen,
My dear friends:

We are grateful to People in Need for giving the 2008 Homo Homini award to the signatories of *Charter 08*. To those who have been oppressed for signing the Charter, to the Chinese who uphold their legal rights, and to Dr. Liu Xiaobo who is still in detention for gathering signatories, this is indeed an encouragement. Dr. Liu Xiaobo has always adhered to his belief in human rights and democracy, and has been repeatedly imprisoned because of his persistence. To accept this award on his behalf is not only our duty, but also our honor.

Different people may interpret *Charter 08* differently. The signatories believe the *Charter* reiterates a civil society's basic values and goals, which are clearly defined in China's Constitution as well as UN conventions and declarations signed and approved by China. We simply call for the realization instead of repellency of such values and goals.

Many noticed that *Charter 08* and *Charter 77* are based on the same principles. Yes, we are inspired by Czech's *Charter 77* movement in the 70s' and the works of Vaclav Havel and other authors. Both Charters are the results of similar tyranny, social life and morality, which does not encourage truth and justice, as well as the duty and pressure to fulfill the international conventions to protect human rights.

Just as *Charter 77*, *Charter 08* is not a declaration by political rivals. We are skeptical, yet constructive. We care about the civil society's development in China, and we aspire for a sound society. We discard the tradition of changing the political regime or the rulers. We try to dialogue with our government, which requires patience and expostulation. We have both the courage and the patience.

The intention of *Charter 08* is to seek understanding and consensus, but not confrontation. In China, the powerless, while fighting for their rights, do not consider any failure or setbacks experienced by the powerful as a victory. The signers' senses of morality and responsibility surpass those of the current rulers and the past revolutionists. Throughout history, those who were power-thirsty always regarded the damage to the society as the damage and weakening to the existing political power, and they tried to achieve their goals

by cultivating hatred, chaos and conflicts. Signing the *Charter* demonstrates our disagreement with such tradition, because we believe any harm to the society is harm to ourselves. Despite the harassment, threats and oppression, the signatories will stick to the rational and peaceful manner we have always adopted.

Over a century ago, Chinese started the pursuit of constitutional democracy. However, due to the lack of freedom in the traditional political culture, troubles both at home and from abroad, as well as the political parties' habit of resorting to force instead of consultation and compromise for solutions, we experienced more setbacks than success. China's current constitutional democracy is facing new challenges, as the Stalinism not only is not fading away, but also is trying to revitalize through market economy which gave birth to a weirdo nurtured by the world's capital. Many, both Chinese and foreigners, equalize figures, such as GDP, with the legitimacy of political power. If 30 years ago, China was the same as the Czechoslovakia, suffering oppression politically, the current powerless in China are fighting for not only their political rights, social justice, but also their social and economic rights. *Charter 08's* core lies in human rights, covering the rights to be a human as a human, as well as the legitimate demands regardless of one's social status, occupation, ethnic group, gender, religion and experience. Despite all the difficulties, we are confident about the development of human right situation and constitutional democracy in China.

The enterprises of human rights and constitutional democracy in China are our own responsibilities, at the same time, being parts of the global trend. Just like capital and technology, information and new ideas are spreading fast. *Charter 08's* signers, along with Chinese people and the whole world are concerned about the current economic crisis. In the double crisis of economy and politics, we will never forget the concern and support from the Czech people, and we look forward to your progress with equal enthusiasm.

Thank you for your attention!

(see also http://eu-china.net/web/cms/front_content.php?idcat=4&idart=1085)