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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Singapore Government Continues to Silence Political Opposition

The International Steering Committee of the Community of Democracies (ISC/CD), a global network of 25 civil society leaders, condemns the imprisonment and continued harassment of Singapore Democratic Party president and ISC/CD member Dr. Chee Soon Juan and his colleague, Ghandi Ambalam. The ISC/CD calls on the Convening Group of the Community of Democracies and other international and intergovernmental organizations to denounce the continued use of the law by Singapore's government as a weapon to restrict the activities of political opposition in the country.

Dr. Chee and Mr. Ambalam were imprisoned on January 19th after returning to court to appeal charges against them. They had been convicted in 2006 under what is called the Miscellaneous Offences Act for distributing pamphlets that were critical of the ruling People's Action Party without a permit. This is only Dr. Chee's most recent imprisonment; he has been jailed approximately eight times for his attempts to exercise his right to free expression. Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights guarantees "the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers." The government of Singapore has consistently violated these and other fundamental international human rights norms, demonstrating a complete disregard for the protections that should be granted to its citizens. Dr. Chee's dedication to those rights has cost him his job and he has been bankrupted by repeated government lawsuits.

A January 19 statement by Amnesty International writes that Dr. Chee "is known internationally as a non-violent campaigner for human rights and democracy," adding that he received the prestigious Defender of Democracy Award from Parliamentarians for Global Action in 2003. Numerous international organizations have criticized his past imprisonments and harassment, yet the government of Singapore has failed to adjust its behavior toward him and other democratic leaders in the country.

The ISC/CD is committed to Dr. Chee's cause and will be monitoring the situation closely. We call on the members of the Community of Democracies to raise this issue directly with the government of Singapore, insisting that it respect the international norms set forth by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the Warsaw Declaration of the Community of Democracies.

***The ISC is a global network of civil society organizations committed to
democracy and human rights, related to the Community of Democracies.***