

ROUNDTABLE:

The United States Constitution and the Adoption of International Human Rights Instruments: Freeing the Political Logjam

PANEL I—THE PROCESS OF AND OBSTACLES TO UNITED STATES RATIFICATION OF INTERNATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS INSTRUMENTS

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The idea for this Roundtable was raised last summer when several of our students decided that human rights issues should be the focus of special interest during this academic year. The specific subject was decided upon because the need for ratification by the United States of basic human rights instruments is so pressing. While most of us agree on the desirability of ratification, the practical question of how to meet the objections to ratification by the United States continues to elude us. The purpose of this Roundtable is to explore strategies for ratification by the United States of the United Nations instruments on human rights, including the two Covenants on Human Rights and the Convention on Torture, as well as other multilateral treaties on human rights. This is not a new problem and the Bush Administration is not the first one to be asked to address the question. As a matter of fact, Professor Sohn and Professor Lillich contributed to a 1988 symposium at the University of Virginia called An Agenda for the

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New Administration.¹ Apparently, little of what was suggested has been heeded.

Novel approaches to bringing about ratification are sorely needed. I very much hope that some new elements of a successful strategy can be found during these meetings.

¹ See *Symposium on Human Rights: An Agenda for the New Administration*, 28 VA. J. INT'L L. 827 (1988).