

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL PRESS RELEASE

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Amnesty International takes on divided world

(Cocoyoc, Mexico) In a world marred by division and discord, fuelled by inequality and impunity, the global leadership of Amnesty International today concluded their 28th International Council Meeting with a resounding commitment to tackling poverty and disparity as the gravest global threats to universal human rights.

For the past week, more than 400 delegates from 75 countries have participated in the International Council Meeting which is a forum that Amnesty International's convenes every two years to plan, review and decide the organization's human rights work.

"The human rights challenges of a world divided by inequality, impunity and poverty call for courageous and broad based human rights defence," said Amnesty International Secretary General Irene Khan.

"Amnesty International -- the world's largest movement of human rights activists -- joins together in concerted action for human rights, people from all over the world, people of many different nationalities, ethnicities, ages, religions, cultures who share one common vision that human rights must be respected, protected and fulfilled for all people everywhere."

Delegates from every region of the world affirmed the contribution that Amnesty International makes in defending the human rights of the most marginalized. To better challenge governments' erosion of human rights standards and ensure Amnesty International's relevance to those who face the bigotry and exclusion of discrimination, the organization took a decision to address grave abuses of human rights enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other international human rights instruments.

"People living in poverty have the least access to the power needed to shape policies that may eradicate poverty and frequently are denied effective remedies for violations of their human rights," said Ms Khan.

With the prevention of violence against women as its major campaigning focus, Amnesty International's leaders committed themselves anew to work for universal respect for sexual and reproductive rights. Amnesty International committed itself to strengthening the organization's work on the prevention of unwanted pregnancies and other factors contributing to women's recourse to abortion and affirmed the organization's policy on selected aspects on abortion (to support the decriminalisation of abortion, to ensure women have access to health care when complications arise from abortion and to defend women's access to abortion, within reasonable gestational limits, when their health or human rights are in danger), emphasizing that women and men must exercise their sexual and reproductive rights free from coercion, discrimination and violence.

The International Council Meeting also marked the one year countdown to the Beijing Olympics 2008 noting that during the bidding for and awarding of the Olympics to Beijing, both the Chinese authorities and the International Olympic Committee (IOC) had stated that the Games would help develop human rights in China. Amnesty International agreed it will campaign to hold the Government of China and the IOC accountable to their pledge.

Amnesty International concluded its week-long gathering emphasizing its own roots of standing up for those whose rights are imperilled by injustice, impunity and abuse.

"Working for the release of prisoners of conscience or prisoners of poverty, prejudice and violence,

Amnesty International will stay true to its mission of standing up for the marginalized. The human dignity of all people is at the heart of the human rights cause. Promoting the dignity of people who by reason of poverty and prejudice have least access to human rights is Amnesty International's most pressing task. And as the leaders of this world-wide movement for human rights, we renew again our conviction and our determination to do everything in our power to stand up and defend universal human rights for all people everywhere." Ms Khan said.

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