

Asian Leaders sign up for human rights

South Korean President Kim Dae-jung today joined more than six million others around the world as he pledged to support the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), as part of a global campaign organized by Amnesty International.

The campaign celebrates the 50th anniversary of the UDHR, which takes place on 10 December 1998, when President Kim's signature, along with millions of others in the "world's biggest book", will be officially presented to UN Secretary General Kofi Annan in Paris.

In signing the pledge, President Kim expressed his hope that this anniversary year would see dramatic improvements in human rights world-wide.

President Kim Dae-jung joined Amnesty International in inviting other Asian leaders to join in the campaign. He said: "The promotion of human rights is a goal that all leaders should work together to achieve. We must all offer maximum cooperation to Amnesty International in achieving this."

Amnesty International Secretary General Pierre Sané, who is on an official visit to South Korea said: "As a former prisoner of conscience facing a death sentence, who was freed with the help of human rights activists around the world, President Kim's personal experience demonstrates the importance of international human rights protection."

Secretary General Pierre Sané will be writing to other Asian leaders asking them to sign the pledge as well. "We want all leaders to sign this pledge to publicly demonstrate their personal commitment to working for a world without cruelty and injustice, illiteracy and hunger," Mr Sané said.

At least six million people from more than 86 countries around the world have so far pledged their support, and Mr Sané said that Amnesty International had set a target of more than 10 million signatures by the anniversary itself.

Other world leaders who have pledged their support include: US President Bill Clinton; UK Prime Minister Tony Blair; Ugandan President Yoweri Museveni; Venezuelan President Rafael Caldera; Czech president Vaclav Havel; Israeli President Ezer Weizmann; and Moroccan Prime Minister Abderrahmane Youssoufi.

Leaders from Asia who have signed include: Thai Prime Minister Khun Chuan Leekpai; Australian Prime Minister John Howard; Mongolian President N. Bagabandi and President Lee Teng-hui of Taiwan. .../ENDS

**For more information, or to arrange an interview, please call:
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