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## **Dow cannot run from the legacy of Bhopal by sponsoring ‘Run For Water’ events**

The Dow Chemical Company (Dow) cannot run from its responsibility for the ongoing impacts of the 1984 Bhopal gas leak by sponsoring Live Earth ‘Run for Water’ events, Amnesty International said today.

Thousands of people died and more than 100,000 continue to suffer from serious health problems as a consequence of 1984’s deadly leak of toxic chemicals from a Union Carbide pesticide plant in Bhopal, India. Dow became 100% owner of the Union Carbide Corporation (UCC) in 2001.

Since then survivors and human rights groups have been campaigning for Dow to address the ongoing impacts of the disaster, including contamination of water by chemical waste, but the company has consistently ignored these calls, denying any responsibility for UCC’s liabilities in Bhopal.

On 18 April Dow is sponsoring a series of running events across the globe, organized by environmental organization Live Earth to raise awareness about water scarcity.

“Sponsoring an event that highlights water scarcity while ignoring ongoing problems with access to clean water and medical care, amongst other issues, in Bhopal is at best hypocrisy, at worst, a flagrant attempt by Dow to try to white-wash its image,” said Audrey Gaughran, Director of Global Issues at Amnesty International.

“Dow may be trying to run away from the legacy of Bhopal, but it can’t be allowed to hide behind sponsorship of ‘Run for Water’ events.”

For more than 25 years both the government of India and the companies involved have failed to address the human rights abuses that have been the lasting legacy of the Bhopal gas leak.

“Bhopal raises fundamental questions about the accountability of corporations and the capacity and willingness of governments to address corporate-related human rights abuses,” said Audrey Gaughran.

“For years the government of India, UCC and Dow have played ‘pass the parcel’ over the issue of responsibility, while the people of Bhopal have struggled to obtain even basic relief such as clean water.”

Amnesty International has called on Live Earth to reconsider the sponsorship unless Dow publicly commits to the forthcoming government clean up process in Bhopal. Dow has not done this.

Amnesty International shares Live Earth’s concerns about the impact of climate change and the urgent need to take action to protect human rights, including the right to water. But the organisation fears that Dow’s

sponsorship poses a serious risk to the credibility of the Live Earth “Run for Water” events.

“Companies must understand that they cannot escape responsibility for human rights abuses in one area by engaging in positive action elsewhere. Human rights abuses cannot be ‘offset’ by corporate good works,” said Audrey Gaughran.

“The only way for Dow and UCC to finally put the legacy of Bhopal to rest is to work with the affected communities and government of India to fully, and effectively, address the human rights impact of the disaster.”

## Background

Shortly before midnight on 2 December 1984, thousands of pounds of deadly chemicals leaked from Union Carbide’s pesticide plant in Bhopal, central India. Around half a million people were exposed. Between 7,000 and 10,000 people died in the immediate aftermath and a further 15,000 over the next 20 years. More than 25 years later, the site has not been cleaned up, the leak and its impact have not been properly investigated, more than 100,000 people continue to suffer from health problems without the medical care they need, and survivors are still awaiting fair compensation and full redress for their suffering. Leaking waste material has polluted groundwater on which thousands of people depend for drinking water and other domestic uses.

Dow has consistently denied any responsibility for the liabilities of UCC in Bhopal, but in stark contrast, Dow accepted asbestos-related liabilities of UCC in the United States that were incurred as early as 1972.

Amnesty International works in partnership with organisations such as The International Campaign for Justice in Bhopal to help support survivors and activists to demand justice, accountability and an end to 25 years of human rights violations.

Their unstinting campaign for adequate clean-up, access to clean water and proper medical care, compensation and accountability has seen survivors and supporter groups, including children and people with disabilities, repeatedly make the 800-kilometre march from Bhopal to New Delhi.

More than 100 Bhopal survivors are launching an indefinite protest in New Delhi today, urging the Indian government to resolve the liabilities in Bhopal.

Amnesty International's work on the Bhopal disaster is part of its Demand Dignity campaign, calling for an end to the human rights violations that drive and deepen poverty. The campaign mobilizes people all over the world to demand that governments, corporations and others who have power listen to the voices of those living in poverty and recognize and protect their rights.

On 26 March 2010 Amnesty International wrote to Live Earth to express concern about Dow’s involvement in the “Run for Water” events. The organization has not received a response to that letter.