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MEDIA ADVISORY

Publication of a new document on women's human rights

1998: A WONDERFUL YEAR FOR WOMEN'S HUMAN RIGHTS?

The United Nations, governments and the human rights of women

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1998 should be a wonderful year for women's human rights. The United Nations (UN) will mark the 50th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights; its Commission on the Status of Women will review key sections from the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, and the Commission on Human Rights will review the implementation of the 1993 Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action. Plans by the UN Secretary-General for reform of the UN and Mary Robinson's appointment as High Commissioner for Human Rights all augur a new impetus for women's human rights.

But will all this potential be fulfilled? In a new report published today, Amnesty International looks at some of the reasons why women's human rights have, until recently, been neglected in the United Nations (UN), and examines some important developments that have taken place since the 1993 UN World Conference on Human Rights in Vienna and the 1995 Fourth UN World Conference on Women in Beijing.

According to the human rights organization, "1998's potential will only be fulfilled if the UN ensures that it meets the needs of women's human rights and if governments work at international and national levels to implement the commitments they have made."

On the eve of the 50th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Amnesty International calls on governments and the UN to "make the rhetoric of Vienna and Beijing -- and so many other outstanding commitments -- a reality for women by integrating a gender-perspective into the analysis and application of existing human rights standards and machinery".

Towards that aim, the report recommends steps that governments and the UN should be taking to implement outstanding commitments and ensure the full integration of women's human rights, including:

- measures aimed at making human rights standards and machinery more relevant to the human rights of women at both the national and the international levels;
- the implementation by the UN Commission on the Status of Women of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action -- particularly at the national level;
- the full integration of a gender perspective into the Commission on Human Rights' country and thematic mechanisms;

- and recommendations concerning UN reform: the role of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, ratification of human rights treaties, women as human rights experts; gender perspectives in the proposed international criminal court, and the use of gender inclusive language.

For further information, copies of the report or to arrange an interview, please call Amnesty International, International Secretariat, on +44 171 413 5562