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LUSOPHONE SUMMIT: HUMAN RIGHTS SHOULD BE ON THE AGENDA

As the seven countries who use Portuguese as their official language meet for their first summit, Amnesty International called on them to include the protection and promotion of human rights as a central plank of their cooperation.

The heads of state of Angola, Brazil, Cape Verde, Guinea-Bissau, Mozambique, Portugal and São Tomé e Príncipe will meet in Lisbon on 17 July 1996 to formally establish the new *Comunidade de Países de Língua Portuguesa (CPLP)*, the Community of Portuguese-Speaking Countries. The meeting is expected to produce final resolutions declaring the basis upon which the new community will operate.

“These countries should be united not just by a common language and by cultural, economic and political ties, but also by a common resolve to protect and promote human rights among the community,” Amnesty International said.

All seven have already taken the important step of abolishing the death penalty and Brazil has drawn up a National Action Plan on Human Rights. The establishment of the CPLP will facilitate coordination of the seven countries’ efforts to promote the peace process in Angola which cannot succeed unless it is based on the observance of human rights, Amnesty International said.

Amnesty International welcomed the summit as a chance for the new community to take concrete action on improving human rights. It is calling on the CPLP to resolve at its first summit to:

- Make a joint declaration committing the community members to protect human rights and, at each ensuing summit, to devote an agenda item to report on progress made and identify the challenges ahead; and
- Ensure the widest scope for debate on human rights in community summits by inviting non-governmental organizations to participate fully in subsequent summits.

The organization is also calling on the CPLP to make commitments to:

- Protect human rights workers and create an environment in which human rights organizations can pursue their aims;

- Ratify all international human rights treaties. Make these effective by incorporating the provisions of international standards into their respective national laws;
- Act together as a community to promote and protect human rights, in part by establishing a body to promote and fund human rights education projects and materials; and
- Work together as a community to promote adequate human rights monitoring in Portuguese-speaking countries where human rights violations are particularly severe, such as Angola and East Timor.

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