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## Summit of the Americas: Draft Declaration falls short on human rights

The draft declaration being negotiated by governments in advance of the Fifth Summit of the Americas falls short on human rights, warned Amnesty International today, as it issued a series of recommendations to improve the official declaration.

“The draft declaration being taken to the Americas Summit is disappointing when it comes to human rights,” said Susan Lee, Americas Director at Amnesty International. “It is only by making meaningful commitments to strengthen human rights protection that governments will truly improve the lives of their citizens. Failure to put human rights at the centre of the Summit will put the lives of millions at risk.”

In its briefing, Amnesty International highlights that while addressing many serious issues, the official declaration needs to strengthen its human rights component. In particular, the organization believes the Summit’s declaration must emphasize issues including:

- **Poverty**, by making a clear commitment to addressing the high levels of preventable maternal mortality and the deprivation suffered by millions living in slums across the Americas.
- **Energy projects**, by addressing the negative impact some projects can have on people’s enjoyment of their right to adequate healthcare, housing, food and livelihood and particularly on the land rights of the hemisphere’s Indigenous Peoples.
- The **operations of companies**, by acknowledging the need for strong legislation to hold corporations to account for their potentially negative impact on human rights.
- **Climate change**, by committing to the adoption of policies that put human rights considerations at the centre of both reversing and mitigating climate change.
- **Public security**, by committing to ensure that public security laws and practices, including those dealing with terrorism and organized crime, comply fully with human rights obligations, such as the right not to be arbitrarily detained, tortured or subjected to enforced disappearance.
- Strengthening **democratic governance**, by promising to improve the low rate of ratification of most of the hemisphere’s human rights treaties.

Amnesty International’s recommendations also highlight the need for the US to lift its economic embargo on Cuba, which is preventing Cubans from enjoying human rights such as adequate healthcare, education and housing.

“Human rights cannot be considered an optional extra; they must be at the heart of all deliberations and commitments arising from this Summit,” said Susan Lee. “The rights of people living in slums, of Indigenous Peoples facing dislocation from their land, and of people caught-up in abusive public security laws must be unequivocally recognized and firmly protected. Human rights provide the blueprint for the “secure future” the Declaration envisions for citizens of the Americas.”

“Governments in the Americas have an unprecedented opportunity to make this a summit of meaningful commitments and problem-solving if they make sure it is a summit focused on human rights,” said Susan Lee. “For millions of the Americas’ poorest citizens, it is literally a matter of life and death.”

### **Background Information**

An Amnesty International delegation will participate in the fifth Summit of the Americas, to be held in Trinidad and Tobago between 16 and 18 of April 2009 and in the Summit of the People, between 14 and 16 April 2009.

The team will be made up of Alex Neve, Secretary General of Amnesty International Canada (English); Ivahanna Larrosa, Director of Amnesty International Uruguay and Stacy Shapiro, Americas Campaign Coordinator.

For more information or to arrange an interview with one of Amnesty International’s experts, please contact:

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