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Paraguay: MERCOSUR Summit Meeting: A real social agenda requires full respect for human rights

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Asunción - In response to the Paraguayan Government's request to consider introducing "a paragraph on the social strengthening of MERCOSUR", Amnesty International is recommending that the trading block makes human rights a main focus of its Social Agenda.

As part of its efforts to bring the question of human rights into the debate around globalization, Amnesty International is again calling on MERCOSUR leaders to ensure that human rights are included as a key discussion point in their bilateral relations. The measures under consideration should not be limited solely to economic matters. Multilateral agreements, such as the "Multilateral Agreement on Social Security", signed on 15 December 1997, and migration agreements that guarantee labour equality and respect for existing international treaties, such as those relating to child labour, education and health, must also be put into practice.

Both member States and associate members of the block have a challenge before them as far as human rights are concerned. Discrimination, torture, ill-treatment by the security forces and police, the policy of zero tolerance as a response to "insecurity", the proliferation of arms and the sale on the free market of implements that can be used for torture are also points that affect MERCOSUR members.

As the Secretary General of Amnesty International recently said, "the real sources of insecurity for many people lie in the failure to halt the unimpeded flow of small arms, to eradicate extreme poverty and preventable diseases, to arrest and treat the spread of HIV/AIDS, and deal with the social dimensions of globalization. Real security will remain illusory, especially for the poor, so long as police, courts and state institutions in many countries remain inept or corrupt. Many women will continue to feel insecure as long as they are unprotected from violence in their homes and communities."

For further information contact the office of Amnesty International Paraguay on either +595 (21) 224 624 or 202 846.

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For more information please call Amnesty International's press office in London, UK, on +44 20 7413 5566
Amnesty International, 1 Easton St., London WC1X 0DW. web: <http://www.amnesty.org>

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