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ECUADOR: AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL REQUESTS COMMITMENT TO HUMAN RIGHTS FROM NEW ECUADORIAN PRESIDENT

Amnesty International's Secretary General Pierre Sané has requested the President-elect of Ecuador Abdalá Bucaram Ortiz to outline his government's unqualified commitment to upholding human rights.

"I am taking this opportunity to request that in your inaugural speech you pledge your government's commitment to the protection and promotion of human rights and outline a program that will address the issue," Mr Sané said in an open letter addressed to Addalá Bucaram.

In the nine-page letter dated 15 July 1996 and made public to-day, Mr Sané stated that to make such a commitment and to put in place a positive human rights program would send a clear message to all Ecuadorians and to the international community "that an unqualified respect for human rights is both a principle and a practice which a government under your leadership will adhere to at all times".

As well, the letter outlines Amnesty International's concerns in Ecuador and proposes a set of recommendations to the government. These are:

- the immediate and unconditional release of six prisoners of conscience, widely known as the "Putumayo Case Prisoners", whom Amnesty International believes were falsely convicted for their alleged participation in an armed attack on an Ecuadorian security patrol in December 1993;
- the review of procedures and conditions prevailing in Ecuador's detention centres and prisons, with a view to preventing torture and other cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment;
- the end to impunity, by first identifying those factors which have adversely affected or obstructed the bringing to justice of those responsible, and then taking the necessary steps to rectify these factors;
- the rejection of every attempt to reintroduce the death penalty in Ecuador;
- the adoption of legislation which will bring into practice standards already enshrined in the Constitution and which uphold the protection of human rights, but which have no practical effect at present;

- the adherence to international standards on the protection of refugees ratified by Ecuador; and
- the unqualified adherence to international human rights standards and the ratification of the Inter-American Convention on the Forced Disappearance of Persons and of the Inter-American Convention on the Prevention, Punishment and Eradication of Violence against Women.

Mr Sané added that Amnesty International looked forward to a constructive dialogue with the forthcoming government about the promotion and protection of human rights in Ecuador.

The Secretary General concluded his open letter by proposing to the President-elect of Ecuador that his government set up a human rights National Action Plan, in keeping with one of the recommendations of the United Nations World Conference on Human Rights, held in Vienna in June 1993.

The National Action Plan “should take into account the views and concerns of Ecuador’s representatives of civil society, including non-governmental human rights organizations,” Mr Sané said.

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