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CHINA: BACKGROUND INFORMATION ON APPLICATION FOR VISAS TO
ANTI-CORRUPTION CONFERENCE

Amnesty International delegates have been refused visas to attend the Seventh International Anti-Corruption Conference to be held in Beijing from 6-10 October.

The delegates are: Arlette Laduguie, China researcher based at the International Secretariat; and Piet Van Reenen, Deputy Chair of the organization's Dutch Section. The two had still not received their visas on Tuesday for the conference which starts on Friday this week.

The visa applications were submitted to Chinese embassies in London and The Hague in September. Last week, the organization was told that delays in issuing visas for the conference were caused by the fact that authorization or instructions from the government had not yet reached the embassy in London.

However, Amnesty International had been officially invited to participate in the international conference, which is being organized by the Supreme People's Procuratorate and the Ministry of Supervision of the People's Republic of China.

As well, the delegates had fulfilled all the specified requirements for registration and visa applications for this conference and is aware that other delegates who have done the same have been granted visas.

Amnesty International sent a fax on 29 September to the Chinese ambassador in London and The Hague, including a letter of invitation sent in March this year to the delegates by the Deputy Procurator General, Liang Guoqing, the Vice-Chairman and Secretary General of the conference. On Tuesday, this letter was dismissed by a London embassy official as a "private" and not "official" letter because it did not indicate the work unit of Mr Guoqing. As well, a separate official letter of invitation with the official stamp had been previously sent to the embassies with the visa applications.

The first international anti-corruption conference was held in Washington in 1983, and has subsequently been held in New York, Hong Kong, Sydney, Amsterdam and Mexico City. The last conference in Mexico was attended by 340 delegates from 60 countries. The conference is a forum for lawyers, judges, police and government officials to discuss issues relating to corruption; this conference is focusing on how to combat corruption in society and how corruption threatens social stability and development.

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