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**CHINA: AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL DELEGATION MEETS WITH CHINESE
PARLIAMENTARIANS AT BEIJING CONFERENCE**

BEIJING— An Amnesty International delegation attending the 96th Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) Conference, held in Beijing from 16 - 22 September, today welcomed the opportunity to meet with members of China's National People's Congress (NPC) and other government advisers present.

The delegation's leader was introduced, along with others, to President Jiang Zemin and NPC chairman Qiao Shi. Amnesty International delegates were also pleased to make contact with parliamentarians from around the world, many of whom are members of the organisation and supporters of its work.

Rory Mungoven, Amnesty International's Asia director, welcomed the emphasis placed on legislative reform in statements to the IPU conference by NPC Chairman Qiao Shi and members of the Chinese parliamentary group.

"The National People's Congress has a critical role to play in strengthening the legal protection of human rights in China, and ensuring adherence to the law," Mr Mungoven said. "We hope that our contacts with NPC members here mark the beginning of a dialogue like that we enjoy with parliamentarians the world over. Amnesty International wants to encourage the process of reform in China and stands ready to contribute in any way it can."

"We are sorry that it has not proved possible at this time to meet with other groups, such as academics and legal experts, who are working in this area. Exchanges of this kind should be a natural part of China's engagement with the international human rights community. The world can better understand changes underway in this country if China opens itself to contacts of this kind."

"We welcome the emphasis given by this conference to the protection and promotion of human rights, particularly those of women and children. Parliamentarians are uniquely placed to translate international commitments into concrete action at the local level. We hope they will follow through on the good intentions they have expressed this week," Mr Mungoven said.

"The Chinese delegation has made a positive contribution to debate on these important issues. Notably, the IPU's resolution on the rights of women and children was based on a draft resolution proposed by China."

"As this meeting takes place, parliamentarians are under attack in countries around the world, including Cambodia, Colombia, Indonesia, Malaysia, Myanmar and Nigeria. This should remind all delegates here of the importance of strengthened protection for fundamental freedoms of expression and association. We hope that the IPU will continue its important work in this area."

Mr Mungoven reiterated Amnesty International's long-standing concerns about human rights violations in China, in particular the arbitrary use and abuse of the law by officials. The organization's 1996 report, *China: No one is safe*, highlights unfair trials, the endemic use of torture in prison and police cells, the high number of death sentences and executions, crackdowns on

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ethnic minorities calling for more independence, and the repression of religious freedom. Amnesty International has documented nearly 2,000 political prisoners in China.

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