

11 DECEMBER 1996 -- FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL SENDS OPEN LETTER TO HONG KONG CHIEF EXECUTIVE DESIGNATE TUNG CHEE-HWA

Amnesty International today sent an open letter to the Chief Executive Designate of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (SAR) of the People's Republic of China, Mr Tung Chee-hwa.

The letter expresses Amnesty International's wish to meet him at an early opportunity to discuss its human rights concerns in Hong Kong.

"One pillar of Hong Kong's development is the effective protection and promotion of all human rights," Amnesty International's Secretary General Pierre Sané, states in the letter. "Such protection is needed today more than ever, as fast-growing economies rely increasingly on highly educated workforces, the free flow of information, the rule of law and open forms of governance."

"Effective guarantees for human rights are not a luxury, but a basic requirement for Hong Kong as it faces increasing competition from other Asia-Pacific centres and as the globalization of the economy progresses. As Chief Executive Designate, you will carry a key responsibility in ensuring that Hong Kong's transition is successful."

Amnesty International is urging the Chief Executive Designate to publicly commit himself to taking the following steps regarding human rights concerns:

- 1. The future of the Bill of Rights:** The Bill of Rights should remain in force during his administration, and should not be amended in any way which reduces its scope and effectiveness. No law passed by the Hong Kong SAR, whether or not in pursuance of the Basic Law, should infringe upon or undermine the rights and freedoms safeguarded under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) and other international human rights standards.
- 2. The future applicability of the ICCPR to Hong Kong and the reporting obligation:** Mr Tung should work with the Government of the People's Republic of China (PRC) to develop a procedure for reporting to the Human Rights Committee on the implementation in Hong Kong of the ICCPR and other international human rights standards, such as the Convention against Torture and the Convention on the Rights of the Child. The Hong Kong SAR Government should be entrusted by the PRC Government with the consultations and drafting necessary to prepare the sections of these reports which concern Hong Kong, and with their presentation before relevant United Nations (UN) bodies.

- 3. The Court of Final Appeal and the independence of the Judiciary:** The preparations for establishing the Court of Final Appeal should be carried out in an open manner and the Court should have all the necessary administrative support from the day it starts operating. Mr Tung should also commit himself to nominating to the Judicial Services Commission people who command strong respect among the Hong Kong Judiciary and legal circles, and will inspire the confidence of the Hong kong public.

- 4. The establishment of a Human Rights Commission:** The establishment of an independent Human Rights Commission without prejudice to the powers and effectiveness of the courts, should be a priority. This commission should comply with standards set out by the UN and by Amnesty International.

- 5. No restoration of the death penalty:** In accordance with his earlier public statement, Tung Chee-hwa should ensure that the abolition of the death penalty in Hong Kong is not overturned.

ENDS../

For more information, a copy of the full text of the open letter, or to arrange an interview, please call:

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