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UNITED NATIONS CRITICIZED FOR LACK OF COMMITMENT TO AGREEMENT MADE AT WORLD CONFERENCE ON HUMAN RIGHTS

Amnesty International today sharply criticized events at the UN General Assembly which indicate a lack of commitment by the UN to carrying out the recommendations from the World Conference on Human Rights by agreeing only a derisory amount of additional funding for this purpose.

The World Conference on Human Rights, held in Vienna in June this year, was the first high-level conference on human rights in 25 years. The resulting Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action contains an extensive catalogue of recommendations on a wide range of key human rights issues. One crucial recommendation was for a substantial increase in resources for the UN's human rights programme.

The failure of governments to commit themselves and the UN to implement the promises of the World Conference has been most recently demonstrated by the adoption of a resolution by the Third Committee - which deals with humanitarian and social matters - of the UN General Assembly. The resolution, concerning the World Conference for Human Rights, was accompanied by a proposed budgetary allocation of only \$1,167,500 relating to activities in respect of only very few of the issues addressed by the Conference. This amount falls far short of the \$39,687,300 requested by the UN Centre for Human Rights in a detailed plan of activities which it prepared for the implementation of the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action.

An increase in the regular budget for the UN's human rights activities has been proposed by the UN Secretary-General. However, because of the regularization and conversion of posts, the actual total of additional posts proposed would in fact be only six professionals. Even this minimal increase has apparently been cut and a third of it left provisional by the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions. In any event, this amount was aimed at alleviating the current dire financial situation of the UN Centre for Human Rights which was acute even before the World Conference. This additional amount provides no spare capacity to carry out all the recommendations of the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action. The final decision on budgetary matters lies with the Fifth Committee of the General Assembly.

"These developments at the General Assembly demonstrate a highly disturbing lack of political will by the UN to address the promotion and protection of human rights violations around the world", said Amnesty International.

"We strongly urge the Fifth Committee to allocate a much greater amount for implementation of the Vienna Declaration so that the Centre for Human Rights has the necessary resources to carry out the tasks with which it has been mandated, otherwise Vienna will be remembered as the Conference of broken promises".

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