

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL PRESS RELEASE

Public Statement

AI Index: IOR 61/027/2004
News Service No: 323

EMBARGO: WEDNESDAY 22 DECEMBER 00.01 GMT (01.01 BRUSSELS TIME)
(For Wednesday morning media)

MORE RESOURCES FOR EU HUMAN RIGHTS: AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL'S 10-POINT PROGRAMME FOR THE LUXEMBOURG PRESIDENCY

(Brussels 22 December 2004) Amnesty International has drawn attention to the widening gap between the EU's human rights ambitions and the resources available to fund them, in its recommendations released today to the forthcoming Luxembourg EU Presidency.

Among the critical areas highlighted by Amnesty International is the chronic lack of resourcing for the EU's human rights work at Council level including totally inadequate staffing at the Council's General Secretariat.

(The organisation's 10-point program for the EU can be downloaded from 00.01 GMT Wednesday 22 December from <http://www.amnesty-eu.org> or contact the EU Office in Brussels today for an advance copy).

“The EU stands to gain in authority, both at home and in the wider world, if it can show more consistently that human rights are not dispensable and not negotiable. But there needs to be a critical review within all EU institutions of the actual resources allocated to securing human rights,” Director of Amnesty International's EU Office, Dick Oosting said.

“If even a fraction of the resources used to counter terrorism or to fight ‘illegal immigration’ was allocated to looking into the human rights implications of these policies, that would be a start.”

Amnesty International acknowledges that the EU over the past years has developed a number of human rights policy tools, especially in the area of the Common Foreign and Security Policy. But the organisation says it is now time for the EU to pay more attention to the resources needed to actually implement them.

It welcomed last week's decision of the European Council to establish the position of Personal Representative for human rights to support the High Representative for CFSP. “This is an important first step, showing that the Council acknowledges that there is a problem. But much more is needed to fill the capability gap,” Dick Oosting said.

Amnesty International's recommendations call for better resourcing in the following areas:

- The proposed EU human rights agency, and the collective responsibility for human

- rights abuses within the EU;
- Protecting the rights of suspects and defendants;
 - EU policy relating to the return of “illegal migrants”;
 - Guaranteeing refugee protection in the fight against “illegal immigration”;
 - Implementation of the EU's own human rights guidelines;
 - The high level representative for human rights;
 - Human rights in the enlargement process;
 - EU arms control.

For further comment/background and interviews:

Amnesty International EU Office (Brussels):

Tel: 32-2-5021499

Fax: 32-2-5025686

Email: amnesty-eu@aieu.be

Web-site: <http://www.amnesty-eu.org>