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Mexico: President Fox meets Amnesty International Secretary General

Secretary General of Amnesty International, Irene Khan, today met Mexican President Vicente Fox in London. In the thirty-minute long meeting, a number of issues were discussed relating to the Mexican government's action to guarantee the protection and promotion of human rights at home and abroad.

"We appreciated the openness the Fox administration is showing on human rights issues, the progressive stance they have taken in international forums -- including with the ratification of key human rights treaties -- and the dialogue they are seeking to maintain with human rights organizations," Irene Khan said.

"Steps such as the opening of military archives and the appointment of a Special Attorney for the investigation of human rights violations committed by the state in the '60s, '70s and '80s, are promising signs of the government's political will to tackle the heavy legacy of human rights violations in Mexico," she added.

"As the Fox administration approaches its mid-term mark, the challenge it faces is to ensure that legislative and policy changes are reflected in the practice of officials in every law court, police station and prison anywhere in the country," she added.

While acknowledging the positive changes, Amnesty International's Secretary General also expressed concern about continuing practices of human rights violations, including torture, ill-treatment and arbitrary detentions.

"What Mexico needs is a structural reform of the criminal justice system to ensure that human rights are fully protected both in law -- at federal and state level -- and in practice, and that victims of abuses have adequate recourse to justice and reparation," added Mrs Khan.

President Fox and Mrs Khan agreed on the crucial importance of Mexico's Technical Assistance Agreement with the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, which provides an excellent opportunity for identifying and tackling the factors underlying the continuation of human rights violations. Amnesty International stressed that to make this programme truly effective the government should expand the role of civil society -- in particular of human rights organizations.

Background

Vicente Fox was sworn in as President of Mexico in December 2000. In March 2001 he met Amnesty International's then Secretary General Pierre Sané in Mexico City.

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