

1st December 2011

Amnesty International to implement recommendations of Independent Review into payments to former Secretary General

Amnesty International vowed to take all necessary steps to strengthen the organisation's management and governance, following an independent review into payments to its former Secretary General and deputy in December 2009.

In her final report to Amnesty International's governing board – the International Executive Committee (IEC) – the review's author Dame Anne Owers outlined a series of recommendations to address failures in management and governance that led to excessive payments to former Secretary General, Irene Khan, and her deputy Kate Gilmore.

The new Chair of the IEC Pietro Antonioli welcomed Dame Anne's final report and accepted her findings and recommendations in full:

“We welcome the findings of this important report. We have already made considerable progress in addressing many of Dame Anne's recommendations to strengthen our management and governance. Amnesty International's new international governing board pledges to continue this work and implement all the report's recommendations in an open, accountable and timely manner to ensure such an episode is never repeated.

Our first priority remains to advance human rights across the world and this internal work will not distract us from that. The new board wishes to thank all our members for their continued support and dedication as we embark on a challenging year ahead.”

Dame Anne notes that many reforms are already underway to address issues highlighted in the report. The IEC has already undertaken the following steps:

Strengthening the expertise and effectiveness of the IEC and its sub-committees

- In October, a Board review group was appointed to strengthen and support Amnesty International's global governance. This group is overseeing an independent, external evaluation of the IEC's current operations, effectiveness and its access to relevant financial and human resources expertise. It will report to the IEC in June 2012.
- A skills assessment of IEC members is being undertaken to inform training and development, and the selection of externally co-opted members, to address skills gaps among elected members. External experts have also been appointed to a number of IEC sub-committees.

Reviewing our committee structure

- A new Remuneration Committee, which includes external members, is already in place. This team will ensure decisions about senior and executive remuneration are free from bias or conflict of interest.

- A Governance Committee has been created and will advise the IEC on the work plan and key priorities for global governance reform. The terms of reference for these two new sub-committees will be agreed when the IEC meet in December 2011.

Strengthening the internal organisation of the International Secretariat

- A number of improvements have been made to the financial management of the International Secretariat, many of them initiated prior to Dame Anne's report. They include a review of financial policies to ensure they are consistent, in line with best practice and clearly defined in terms of implementation.
- The creation of an important and influential Finance and Audit Committee (FAC) which is already providing proper governance insight and the submission of quarterly management accounts to the Committee.
- New policies governing people management are now in place, including the renegotiation of the union recognition agreement which replaces an agreement from 1973. The board composition of Amnesty International Ltd has been changed to address governance issues identified in the report.

/Ends

Notes

The review was commissioned by the IEC in March 2011 in response to feedback from members following the publication of Amnesty International's corporate accounts in December 2010 which included information about payments made to former Secretary General, Irene Khan, and Executive Secretary General, Kate Gilmore on their departure from Amnesty International.