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Climate change deal must ensure the poor are not left out and further disadvantaged

(Copenhagen) Political leaders meeting in Copenhagen next week must reach a fair, ambitious and binding deal on climate change that does not leave out and further disadvantage the world's poor, said Mary Robinson and Irene Khan.

Mary Robinson – former President of Ireland, former UN High Commissioner for Human Rights and President of the Ethical Globalization Initiative – and Irene Khan – Secretary General of Amnesty International – participated in a conference organized by Amnesty International to discuss the impact of climate change on human rights in the run up to the United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP15).

Mary Robinson and Irene Khan issued the following joint statement:

The cruel fact about global climate change is that while the problem has largely been caused by emissions from the richest countries, the poorest will pay the price. If governments fail to act in Copenhagen next month, basic human rights for the world's poorest and most marginalised communities will hang in the balance. The rights to food, water, shelter and health all risk being undermined by climate change. There is an urgent need for an ambitious, fair and binding agreement at COP15 in Copenhagen.

Stating that the effects of climate change will be felt most by people experiencing human rights abuses because they are poor or vulnerable, like women and indigenous people, Mary Robinson and Irene Khan cautioned that if governments don't comply with their human rights obligations when responding to climate change, it could reinforce the links between denial of rights and vulnerability to climate change. Governments are legally bound to address inequality and non-discrimination and they called for adaptation and mitigation policies to prioritize those whose rights are most at risk through patterns of discrimination.

Warning that billions of the world's poorest people are adversely affected by climate change and yet are not central to the UN Climate Change Conference, they called for an urgent, people-centered approach to countering climate change and ensuring the future for generations to come. They urged governments to conduct adequate and meaningful consultation with affected people, involving them in decision-making on the adaptation and mitigation strategies that would affect their lives.

“The time has passed when politicians and the public could imagine climate change as problem for the future,” cautioned Mary Robinson.

“Climate change is a threat to the survival and enjoyment of human rights. “If we don't deal with climate change no one will have a secure world.”

“The fight against poverty and the fight against climate change are an integral fight for the rights of the marginalized peoples of this world,” said Irene Khan

“If we don’t address climate change all gains to eradicate poverty risk being wiped out.”

Both human rights leaders called on the general public to support the Tck Tck Tck campaign (www.tcktcktck.org).

Notes to editors

TckTckTck is the campaigning hub for more than fifty international organisations that are part of the Global Campaign for Climate Action. Almost ten million TckTckTck supporters have called for an ambitious, binding and fair deal at the United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP15).

Amnesty International’s Demand Dignity campaign aims to end the human rights violations that drive and deepen global poverty. The campaign is mobilizing people all over the world to demand that governments, corporations and others who have power, listen to the voices of those living in poverty and recognize and protect their rights.

An Amnesty International delegation will participate in COP15.