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GLOBALIZE THIS! Respect for human rights.

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Friends,

It is a great personal privilege to have this opportunity to share Amnesty International's views on globalisation. My focus is not on the globalisation of trade and investment but on the globalisation of human rights.

I stand before you today representing more than one million Amnesty International members from around the world. Our members, most of whom are young people, have fought against political imprisonment, torture and extra-judicial murder for years. We want these threats to human freedom to end but we also mobilize to end discrimination, extreme poverty and exploitation of the most vulnerable in our societies. In short, we want another world.

My message to you, on their behalf, is that the human rights framework - and human rights activism - can help the struggle to counter the negative effects of economic globalisation.

We are gathered together under a slogan of hope and empowerment - Another world is possible. We believe that human rights values are essential to realise that other possible world. Indeed, the other world we seek must be one in which every person on this planet enjoys a life of freedom and dignity. In short - a life where they are assured that their basic human rights.

Amnesty is not "anti" globalisation; far from it! Amnesty International was founded 40 years ago in the belief that if people had their human rights violated in one country it had to be the concern of people everywhere. Our basic creed from the beginning was that "Human Rights Have No Boundaries!"

Indeed, and I say this cautiously here (but it's true!), we were early free-traders. The protectionism we opposed, however, was a protectionism that which placed state sovereignty above human rights, territorial borders as barriers to outside scrutiny and action. The 'product' we were exporting globally was the simple idea that governments had to respect and protect basic human rights - and that when the Pinochets of the world were not held accountable in their own countries, it was up to the rest of the world to hold torturers and murderers to account wherever they were found.

This was a globalising message forty years ago when the human rights movement was young, and it remains so today. So we are not opposed to globalisation but we cannot accept a

globalisation that dooms more than a billion people to lives of deprivation incompatible with basic human dignity.

Why worry so much about expanding investment opportunities and so little about globalising respect for human rights? Why is all the attention on binding rules for trade disputes, and so little on international accountability in relation to states' human rights obligations? Why demand the dismantling of barriers to trade while constructing barriers to those displaced by economic globalisation and war?

Globalise yes - but globalise justice and equality, globalise respect for human rights and globalise our struggle to end impunity! This is our globalisation agenda.

Building another world - the human rights contribution

How can the human rights framework aid our struggle to build another world? Let me suggest that human rights law and activism can contribute in three ways.

- first, the human rights framework provides a moral compass for the road ahead - reminding us of why global inequities matter and why we must mobilise globally to counter these inequities;
- second, human rights law offers comprehensive standards based on fundamental, widely shared values for the new world we aim to build; and
- third, the human rights framework identifies the targets of our human rights activism in a way that helps us focus our activism and make it more effective.

Let me say a few words about each of these ideas and hope that I and other Amnesty members here in Porto Alegre will have the opportunity to discuss and debate these ideas with you over the next few days. We are here to learn from other activists and movements about how we can make our own activism more effective

Our common humanity

The starting point for international human rights law - for all the treaties and standards adopted in the last half century by the United Nations and regional organisations - is that all human beings have certain basic rights. We enjoy these rights not because we are citizens of a particular state, members of a political party, or followers of a particular creed. We have rights because we are human, no matter where we live or who we are.

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights does not speak about North and South, East and West, or donor countries and 'emerging markets'. Its language breaks down these barriers, and starts first from the position of our common humanity. Its preamble states

" [The] recognition of the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world"

The very first article of the Universal Declaration proclaims:

"All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood."

Why is this notion of a common humanity so important? First, because it tells us that the starting point for any assessment of economic, social, cultural or political progress must be measured against improvements in individual human lives. And second because it reminds us that all human lives are equally relevant in making this assessment.

We are outraged at global inequities because, and I quote again, "All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights." No individual - and certainly no government - can feel complacent in a world where over 1 billion of our fellow human beings live in conditions of extreme poverty. The human rights framework requires us to go beyond our fellow citizens, co-religionists, castes, or class when we compare ourselves to others.

Amnesty believes that this very basic starting point should be at the core of building another world. Many implications follow:

For example,

- citizens of one country, no matter how powerful, cannot buy their security if the price is insecurity for people elsewhere;
- freedoms for one minority group will be illusory if they lead to greater repression for other groups.

Yet the rhetoric used by governments in the so-called "war against terrorism" has sought to exclude certain groups from membership in the "human family". Suspected "terrorists" or "enemy combatants" are seen as having forfeited any entitlement to be treated as human beings endowed with basic human rights. In the "war on terrorism" there can be human rights free zones. The same dehumanizing language has been used to justify the inhuman treatment of prisoners as part of the "war against crime"; the demonizing of refugees in virulent anti-immigration campaigns, and the persecution of sexual minorities in the name of culture or religion.

These "wars" or campaigns seek to divert our attention from the simple but revolutionary principles embodied in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, principles as relevant in 2003 as they were in 1948. Read the Universal Declaration and think of what the world would be like if all human beings actually had all of these rights.

A comprehensive vision - life in freedom and dignity

The human rights framework offers a comprehensive vision of what constitutes a life in dignity and freedom. Protection of life, liberty and security, rights to free speech, to political participation, to protection of privacy, family rights, and due process of law; but equally, rights to education, health, social security, to work and the basic right to an adequate standard of living - to housing, clean water, and to food.

The human rights framework places a strong emphasis on non-discrimination. It guarantees these rights equally, regardless of race, creed, colour, gender, caste or class. It also offers special and extra protection to the most vulnerable and disadvantaged groups in our societies.

International human rights law is much more than civil and political rights. It goes far beyond a narrow concept of protecting citizens from state interference with their basic freedoms. The human rights framework places equal emphasis on the idea of human dignity and what is required of states - in positive terms - to ensure lives are lived in dignity.

For too long, too little attention has been placed on economic and social rights - and, in this respect, Amnesty International shares some of the blame. Amnesty has only recently committed itself to working across the whole range of human rights. For 40 years we have demanded the release of Prisoners of Conscience and campaigned to end "disappearances", arbitrary killings and torture. Our goal has been to ensure accountability for such these crimes, and an end to impunity, as a means of preventing them.

We need now to convince the world that extreme poverty creates its own kinds of prisons, that arbitrariness in the way the law operates affects livelihoods no less than lives, and that the insecurity that comes from waking each morning hungry, without a home or job can be as terrifying as that instilled by a repressive police force. This is no easy task. Economic and social rights activism, however, is on the move and - after hesitating for too long - Amnesty International is now committed to joining with others to work to achieve these rights.

Another barrier to complete human rights protection is the artificial distinction between the public sphere of political activity and the private sphere of the home in international legal theory. In practice this has meant that the torture experienced by millions of women in the form of domestic violence has been shielded from scrutiny of a human rights movement preoccupied with more traditional forms of state-sponsored torture. Women's rights defenders across the globe have exposed the inadequacy of this approach and have helped transform the very notion of human rights, to make it more responsive to the world women actually experience. Although Amnesty was slow to join this struggle we are planning a major international campaign on violence against women next year and we hope to make up for lost time.

This comprehensive vision of human rights explicitly resists hierarchies and priorities. People used to talk of "first" "second" and "third" generations of human rights. During the Cold War the west advanced the argument that political rights deserved priority over social rights, and many socialist and developing nations took the opposite view.

This is now a stale and pointless debate. Human rights are interdependent. The right to free expression is hollow if people are illiterate and denied an education. And attending schools would hardly be fulfilling if the curriculum were used to promote intolerance or to maintain a repressive regime in power.

The interdependence of human rights reminds us that as we build a better world - challenge inequalities, injustice and repression - we must keep in mind that economic and social justice cannot be won at the expense of civil and political freedoms. Human rights have too often been sacrificed on the altar of economic development. Similarly, free elections, media and a functioning court system on their own will not lift people out of extreme poverty. The fact that hundreds of thousands of people are homeless in the richest countries or depend on charity for their next meal is proof enough of the failure of a vision of freedom that confines itself to civil and political rights.

The interdependence and indivisibility of human rights reminds us that whatever particular political programme we might choose - as we advance the goal of a better world - is less important than whether it delivers all human rights : lives of dignity and freedom.

#### Obligations on those in power

The human rights framework emphasises obligations. Rights imply duties - claims on others to respect those rights. Human rights impose duties on political authorities and those in power. If we are to build a better world, we must spell out what state institutions ought to be doing differently. The human rights framework is not mere rhetoric. In the last 50 years, international bodies have spelled out in some detail what governments must do (or refrain from doing) to live up to their human rights obligations.

For example, over 145 governments have made clear commitments in relation to the right to health that include obligations concerning access to affordable medicines. Such commitments ought to trump patent protections in a just world. Many other examples might be given. Human rights law will not always provide clear answers, but it will bring firmly grounded principles of individual rights and accountability into these discussions.

Perhaps of even more direct relevance to the Social Forum, however, is the fact that international human rights law can be applied to actors other than governments. Other actors - international financial institutions and transnational corporations - also have clear duties to respect human rights. These legal obligations transcend national borders.

This point has been readily accepted in relation to civil and political rights. The laws in many countries recognise that the authorities must take action when there is torture or repression in other countries; for example, to prevent weapons shipments to that country, or to arrest alleged torturers if they travel abroad. We need now to globalise obligations for ESC rights - to require, for example, that a country's patent laws not operate in a way that denies people in other countries access to life-saving medicines.

Corporations too can be brought within the framework of international human rights law. As a human rights lawyer in the United States I have been involved in many cases in which we are using international human rights law in an attempt to hold multinational corporations to account for their complicity in international human rights violations outside the United States. In one case in California we are claiming that UNOCAL, a large US oil company, must be accountable for entering into a joint venture with the repressive military regime in Burma when the natural gas pipeline built by the joint venture was built on the backs of forced labor by the villagers of the region.

The human rights framework is being used by poor, displaced villagers in Burma who cannot obtain justice in their own country to obtain justice based on international duties owed by Unocal that transcend its duties under domestic law. For too long corporations operating globally have exploited weaknesses in national laws and have been party to human rights violations with impunity. International human rights law is part of the solution to corporate accountability and to the creation of a global regulatory framework that allows for a globalisation consistent with freedom and dignity. There is a long way to go but international human rights law has helped to change the terms of the debate.

The values of human rights

Some critiques of human rights used to argue that this framework was too neutral and, by ignoring power structures and the facts of material inequality, only provided the illusion of freedom and equality. Linked to this was the critique that the human rights framework was too legalistic.

International human rights law, however, is not neutral. It does not endorse particular political ideologies or systems of government. It does, however, endorse and defend core values - tolerance, equality, non-discrimination, freedom and human solidarity. Such values lie at the core of the message of this Forum. The fact that these values are set out in a system of international law should be considered a strength, not a weakness. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights is not a legalistic document; it embodies the demands of people from every corner of the globe for a more just world.

Let us use the language of human rights to transcend borders and barriers of all kinds and international human rights law to strengthen accountability.

## Conclusion

The World Social Forum has reminded the world of the reality that hundreds of millions of our fellow citizens live in poverty and insecurity. As human rights activists we share the dream of building a different world.

What is needed now, above all else, is to recommit ourselves to fundamental principles that were solemnly agreed by states more than 50 years ago, in the wake of the horrors of the last global war.

Article 28 of the Universal Declaration states:

"Everyone is entitled to a social and international order in which the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration can be realised."

Such a world would organise itself so as to place value not on systems, economic processes, or the size of a country's defence budget, and certainly not foreign direct investment, but on individual human lives of freedom and dignity.

Do we need another global war before our leaders act as if such principles mattered?

We join you in saying No!