

Dr. Luís Filipe Marques Amado
President of the
Council of Ministers of the European Union

11 October 2007
Ref: B703

Dear Dr Amado,

Approaching the EU –Africa summit: human rights must be the core agenda

As the date for the EU-Africa summit in Lisbon draws near, the media debate regarding attendance at, and logistics of, the summit is in full swing. As Amnesty International has made clear throughout the planning for this event, its effectiveness should not be judged by how many governments are persuaded to sit around a table together, but rather by the concrete outcomes for human rights.

The General Affairs and External Relations Council in October takes place with less than two months to go until the proposed summit. We are therefore writing to you ahead of this meeting to reiterate that it is time for the two sides to focus on what the summit can achieve, and move discussion away from the process for staging it. The Portuguese Presidency has made clear its intention to sign off a new EU-Africa strategy and action plan at the summit. In a number of inputs, Amnesty International has set out its regional human rights priorities for reflection in such agreements, including:

- that EU policies supporting peace, security, human rights, development and trade should be considered in a more coherent manner, and with a rights based approach;
- that the role and capacities of regional human rights protection mechanisms such as the African Court and African Commission on Human and People's Rights should be strengthened;
- that the strategy should identify opportunities for stronger partnership working in international fora, including at the UN and in advancing the work of the International Criminal Court; and
- that the strategy should create a framework for greater reciprocity on migration, placing the rights of those who migrate at the centre of policy making.

The Portuguese Presidency has committed to human rights being on the agenda at every meeting with third countries. Considering the urgent issues that confront Africa and that preoccupy the EU, it is evident that human rights in the broader sense in fact constitute the core agenda for the summit.

In addition to being a high-profile occasion for signing off strategy documents that genuinely address these issues, the summit also provides an opportunity for frank discussion of pressing human rights issues in a number of countries, with representatives of the governments concerned. With so much human, financial and political resource being invested in this event, the opportunity for real progress on matters which impact daily on individual lives must not be missed. With so many key actors present, collective action on the urgent situations in the Darfur region and in Zimbabwe must surely be discussed at the summit.

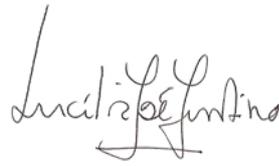
Reciprocity is essential for encounters of this kind to be productive especially on human rights. Amnesty International therefore underlines the need for the EU to be prepared to reflect on shortcomings and obligations where its own credibility may be in question, notably as regards security and counter-terrorism issues. And it should be prepared to take more positive action on human rights in particular where African interests are directly affected, notably with regard to migration.

Thank you for your consideration of these important issues. As always, we stand ready to provide further briefing on any of the human rights concerns referred to in this letter.

Yours sincerely,



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Director,
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Javier Solana, High Representative for CFSP

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Riina Kionka, High Representative's Personal Representative for Human Rights