

Dimitrij Rupel,  
President of the Council of the European Union

22 April 2008  
Our ref :B770

Dear Mr Rupel,

### **EU-Japan Summit**

In view of the forthcoming EU–Japan Summit that you will be co-chairing on 23 April 2008, Amnesty International would like to bring to your attention some human rights concerns in Japan which we hope you will take the opportunity to raise with your counterparts. The guidelines on human rights dialogues highlight the EU’s commitment to make use of every opportunity to raise human rights concerns with third countries at all levels. In particular, we would urge you to highlight EU concerns about comfort women and the continued use of the death penalty at the forthcoming summit.

#### **Comfort Women**

From 1932 to the end of World War II, the government of Japan officially ordered the acquisition of an estimated 200 000 young women – euphemistically known as “comfort women” - for the sole purpose of sexual servitude to the Japanese Imperial Army. This was one of the largest cases of human trafficking in the 20th century.

On 13 December 2007, the European Parliament passed a resolution calling on the Japanese government to formally accept historical and legal responsibility for the subjugation and enslavement of comfort women and to refute publicly any claims that this never occurred. The resolution also called on the Japanese government to implement effective administrative mechanisms to provide reparations to all surviving victims, and to the families of deceased victims, and to take legal measures to remove existing obstacles to obtaining reparations before Japanese courts. Acknowledging and compensating crimes committed in the past in Japan would send a much-needed signal as sexual violence against women is still used as a tool of war in conflict-affected areas.

In line with the European Parliament’s resolution, Amnesty International urges the Presidency to use the EU-Japan summit to add the voice of the Council of the European Union to the call on the Japanese government to acknowledge, apologise to, and compensate, the victims of the comfort women system.

#### **The death penalty in Japan**

Amnesty International is against the death penalty in all circumstances and considers it the utmost cruel and inhuman treatment. We therefore deeply regretted the hanging of four men in Japan – Akinaga Kaoru, 61, Nakamoto Masayoshi, 64, Nakamura Masahuru, 61 and Sakamoto Masahito, 41 – on 10 April 2008. These executions brought the number of executions announced in Japan in 2008 to seven. Executions in Japan are typically held in secret. Until December 2007 the Japanese Ministry of Justice did not disclose the names of those executed or details of their offence. Prisoners are still only informed hours before their executions and these are carried out without prior notice to their families.

The EU was firmly behind the UN General Assembly's adoption in December 2007 of a resolution calling upon all member states to uphold a moratorium on executions as a first step towards abolishing the death penalty. In line with this commitment, the Presidency should use the EU-Japan summit to press the Japanese government:

- to take steps to abolish the death penalty, by commuting all death sentences and imposing a moratorium on pending executions;
- to ensure greater transparency around the application of the death penalty by making available all information regarding its use and any scheduled execution, in order to allow an informed public and parliamentary debate on this issue; and
- to improve the prison conditions of death row prisoners by bringing the Prison Law and all other regulations at detention places into full accordance with international human rights standards.

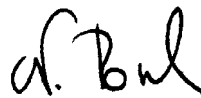
We would welcome any feedback on discussions with the Japanese government on these important issues, and would be happy to provide any further information that would be useful.

Yours sincerely,



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Cc : Javier Solana, High Representative for the Common Foreign and Security Policy  
Benita Ferrero-Waldner, Commissioner for External Relations  
Riina Kionka, Mr Solana's Personal Representative on Human Rights  
Gerhard Lohan, Head of Unit for Japan, Korea, Australia and New Zealand, DG Relex  
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