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**CHINA MISSING FROM GLOBAL TABLE AS CAPE TOWN 2010
CONGRESS OPENED SUNDAY IN SOUTH AFRICA;
Third Lausanne Congress is Most-Representative Event in Church History as
4200 Delegates from 198 Countries Reflect Diverse Richness of Christian Church**

CAPE TOWN, SOUTH AFRICA, October 18, 2010 – As participants gathered in Cape Town for the Third Lausanne Congress on World Evangelization that began here Sunday evening, organizers received news that the second largest delegation – more than 200 Christian leaders from China – were disallowed by their government from attending.

“It is with profound regret that we, as the host country for Cape Town 2010, have learned that the Chinese authorities have disallowed the Chinese invitees to exit China to attend the Congress,” said Peter Tarantal, chair of the South African Lausanne Committee. *“The absence of the Chinese delegation is a great disappointment, and the loss of shared experience and participation from our Chinese brothers and sisters is particularly acute given that South Africa and China enjoy such good bilateral relations. The much-anticipated Africa – China dialogue scheduled to take place at the Cape Town Congress is now postponed.”*

Cape Town 2010, being held October 16-25, is the latest global congress sponsored by The Lausanne Movement, begun by Billy Graham in 1974. Despite the lack of full representation encompassing the breadth and vitality of Christian communities in China, the Congress is possibly the most representative gathering of the Christian church in history. In addition to the 4200 participants from 198 countries meeting together in South Africa, it extends to another anticipated 100,000 individuals at nearly 700 GlobalLink sites in more than 95 countries around the world.

“Lausanne Congress participants selected for Cape Town 2010 express wide-ranging theological and cultural diversity of the Church in every country,” said Doug Birdsall, executive chair of The Lausanne Movement. *“The selection criteria and process used by indigenous leaders in China was the same used by other national and regional selection teams around the world.”*

“The Lausanne planners have no intention of challenging the Chinese government’s principle of independent, autonomous and self-governed churches,” Birdsall continued. *“We recognize the nature of the Christian community and their contribution in Chinese society while respecting China’s established institutions. We very much regret that our intentions and the decentralized invitation process to our Chinese brothers and sisters have been wrongly perceived.”*

The Most Rev. Henry Luke Orombi, Archbishop of the Church of Uganda and honorary chair of the African Host Committee will preside over a long-planned program Monday evening highlighting the church in China. He echoed the profound disappointment and sense of incompleteness among Congress leadership in knowing that Christians from China will not be able to join in the gathering.

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“It is an amazing privilege for Africa, which is fast becoming a center for world missions, to host men and women whom God is bringing from around the world as we begin a new chapter for the 21st Century,” Archbishop Orombi said. “Our African leadership was looking forward to developing closer ties, friendship and mutual understanding with our Chinese brothers and sisters in a spirit of love, humility, fraternity and support. Not having them here is like not having Brazil at the World Cup – it is unimaginable. We want them to know that this community reflecting the worldwide Body of Christ stands with them as they gather in spirit with us here.”

Rev. Morley Lee, General Secretary of The Chinese Coordinating Center of World Evangelization serves as International Deputy Director of The Lausanne Movement for the Chinese World. “We are shocked that the Chinese participants cannot join the Congress, but we are blessed by their peaceful and calm trust in God,” he said. “We believe God still sits on His throne and that ‘He works all things for the good of those who love Him.’”

Mr. Tarantal added, “As a black South African who once tasted the bitter pill of injustice through Apartheid, it is especially painful that in this day and age there still exists the need to struggle and persevere in the fight for freedom. We say to our Chinese family, ‘Your absence is our loss and your non-participation will leave a great void.’”

International news reports have prompted many friends and Christian leaders to express their support to Congress organizers; some have also voiced their sincere and solemn concern to Chinese authorities about their decision to prevent the Chinese leaders from participating.

According to Birdsall, at the last Lausanne Congress in Manila in 1989, 200 seats reserved for the Chinese church were left vacant as the delegation was prevented from leaving the country. But much has changed since then, and over the past two years in-country selection coordinators carefully worked through relationships to include representation of all Christian communities in China, including observers from the China Christian Council (CCC) and Three Self Patriotic Movement (TSPM) and participants from rapidly growing urban house fellowships and large rural churches.

It is a major disappointment to participants from 198 countries that at this Congress, once again the Chinese delegation is conspicuously absent. Though all registered participants had proper documentation, including current passports and visas, most were detained at airports or passport control as they attempted to depart China en route to Cape Town.

“The surprising and unfortunate restrictions placed on our Chinese colleagues may represent mere caution on the part of their government, due to the international nature of this gathering and the global networking that will take place,” Birdsall concluded. “We certainly hope this does not reflect a precedent for a ‘new normal’ of limitations on religious freedom in their country. If so, Christian leaders and believers around the world will have similar concerns that this action is inconsistent with the principles upon which great nations and enduring societies are built.”