



P R E S S R E L E A S E

## **International PEN Congress *Writing in a World Without Peace* meets in Berlin**

**Berlin, 22 May 2006. The World Congress of International PEN, the world association of writers with 141 Centres in 99 countries, opened in Berlin today. More than 450 writers from all parts of the world have come to Berlin to take part in inter-cultural dialogue.**

**PEN intends to adopt a three-year plan designed to give greater emphasis in future to its status as a community of writers whose activities centre on literature. In addition, the Congress on *Writing in a World Without Peace* includes literary events featuring internationally renowned writers which will be open to the general public.**

Delegates attending the Congress will be devoting special attention to countries in which repressive press laws and trumped-up charges of defamation are used to criminalise writers and journalists. The increasing repression to which writers are subjected on the internet is a further issue for debate. During the working sessions the delegates from the PEN Centres will discuss their commitment to freedom of speech and opposition to the persecution of writers and journalists as well as support for women writers.

The PEN Congress is staging several events featuring world-famous literary figures which will be open to members of the public, specifically to those with a keen interest in literature. On 23 May, for example, Günter Grass will open *May I Introduce You To?*, a meeting at which internationally renowned writers will highlight the works of fellow authors. *Literature of the World. A Long Night With...*, to be held later on the same day in the Academy of Arts, features a selection of outstanding works of

contemporary literature from around the world. The session on African literature on Thursday at the Berliner Ensemble theatre has been organised by the German PEN Centre to put the spotlight on African writers.

**International PEN**

Founded in 1921, the international association of writers comprises 141 writers' associations in 99 countries which defend freedom of speech, champion the ideal of one humanity living in peace in one world and foster inter-cultural dialogue between writers. The abbreviation P.E.N. stands for Poets, Playwrights, Essayists and Novelists.

**German PEN Centre**

The German PEN Centre, the German section of International PEN, is hosting this year's International PEN Congress with the support of the Federal Government's Commissioner for Cultural and Media Affairs.

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