



International Commission
against the Death Penalty

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Navanethem (Navi) Pillay

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Founding Members

Rodolfo Mattarollo,
(1939-2014)

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(1952-2018)

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Madrid, 4 May 2018

ICDP 004/2018

Statement by the International Commission against the Death Penalty: Mission to the Republic of Korea, April 2018

A delegation of the International Commission against the Death Penalty (ICDP) led by its Commissioner and former UN Assistant Secretary General Professor Ivan Simonovic visited Seoul, Republic of Korea (South Korea or RoK) from 25 to 28 April 2018. The delegates included ICDP Executive Director Asunta Vivo and ICDP Director of Policy Rajiv Narayan. The delegation held meetings with Chairperson of the National Human Rights Commission of Korea Lee Sung-ho, the President of the Constitutional Court of Korea Judge Lee Jin-sung, senior officials of the Ministry of Justice, members of the diplomatic community and key civil society organizations to discuss issues related to the situation of the death penalty in South Korea.

The delegation participated in an international seminar co-organized by ICDP, the National Human Rights Commission of Korea (NHRCK) and Representative Keum Tae-Sup which was held in the National Assembly of Korea on 26 April. In his key-note speech, Commissioner Simonovic presented several examples of States as they moved away from the death penalty and abolished this cruel, inhuman practice. The seminar was an idea suggested by ICDP President Navi Pillay to NHRCK Chairperson Lee when she met him during an earlier mission to Seoul between 19 and 21 November. Shortly after President Pillay's visit to Seoul, the President of the RoK Moon Jae-in had a meeting with Chairperson Lee where he requested the National Human Rights Commission of Korea to give him advice on alternatives to the death penalty. The seminar was organized to gather information of experiences from other countries and also assess the current situation of the death penalty in South Korea.

On 27 April, Professor Simonovic spoke at a speaking event organized at the Graduate School of International Studies, Yonsei University, Seoul on the issue of the death penalty.

The mission took place during the historic summit of President Moon Jae-in of South Korea and Chairman Kim Jong-un of North Korea at Panmunjom on the inter-Korean border.

“Major moves away from death penalty require political will and political leadership. The world looks at Korea to take its own route to abolish the death penalty, and to respect and protect the fundamental right to life. Commitment to this goal sends a powerful human rights message in time of the Peace Summit meeting between the leaders of



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South and North Korea. This message is that human rights and especially right to life are more important than any form of revenge,” said ICDP Commissioner Prof Simonovic.

Ivan Simonovic
Commissioner
International Commission
against the Death Penalty

Background:

ICDP was founded in Madrid in October 2010. ICDP is composed of 21 personalities of high international standing from all regions of the world who act with total independence and neutrality and work under its President Judge Navi Pillay.

ICDP opposes the death penalty under any circumstances believing that it violates the right to life enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. ICDP promotes the abolition of capital punishment in law in those States that observe a de facto moratorium on the use of the death penalty and promotes moratoriums on executions in states that rarely use the death penalty. In States that continue to carry out executions, ICDP urges strict adherence to international standards. ICDP works with the United Nations and other international and regional organizations, governments and nongovernmental organizations to further the abolition of capital punishment worldwide.

The work of the ICDP is supported by a diverse group of 19 Member States and 3 Observer States from all regions of the world that are committed to abolition of the death penalty. Its secretariat is based in Madrid.