



International Commission
against the Death Penalty

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Giuliano Amato

Louise Arbour

Robert Badinter

Mohammed Bedjaoui

Ruth Dreifuss

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Statement by the International Commission against the Death Penalty: Side-Event on the 25th anniversary of the adoption of the Second Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights

On 18 June 2014, the International Commission against the Death Penalty (ICDP) organized a high-level Side-Event on the 25th anniversary of the adoption of the Second Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (Second Optional Protocol) at the Palais de Nations during the 26th Session of the United Nations Human Rights Council in Geneva.

The Side-Event was chaired by ICDP Commissioner and former President of the Swiss Confederation Ruth Dreifuss and moderated by the Permanent Representative of Belgium at the United Nations Office in Geneva, His Excellency Mr Bertrand de Crombrughe.

In her opening remarks, the United Nations Deputy High Commissioner for Human Rights Ms Flavia Pansieri emphasised that “the OHCHR opposes the use of the death penalty in all circumstances. The death penalty is the ultimate denial of human rights.” She underlined that “ratification on a large scale (of the Second Optional Protocol) could create the momentum to ultimately outlaw executions under international law.”

The panel of Speakers was composed of ICDP Commissioner and former Minister of Justice of France Mr Robert Badinter, former UN Special Rapporteur during the drafting of the Second Optional Protocol Baron Marc Bossuyt, Ms Lily Stella Nguyema Ndong of the Permanent Representative of the Gabonese Republic to the United Nations in New York and Mr Guillaume Colin, representative of the World Coalition against the Death Penalty.

Baron Bossuyt talked about the history of the Second Optional Protocol. He explained that “the Second Optional Protocol was a binding international instrument that contains three obligations: (1) Not to apply the death penalty; (2) Suppress capital punishment from the criminal code and (3) Not to reintroduce the death penalty.” He added that “the best way to abolish the death penalty is by ratifying the Second Optional Protocol.”

“The death penalty is the first affront to human rights because the first human right is the right to life,” said ICDP Commissioner Robert Badinter. “The abolition of the death penalty is supported by the majority but it is not universal; the abolition is not a dream from humanity but it is a progress,” added Mr Badinter. He cited the famous French writer Victor Hugo who wrote that wherever the death penalty is applied, it is always the noticeable and permanent sign of barbarity.

Ms Nguyema Ndong spoke about the abolition of the death penalty in Gabon and how her country’s commitment to end capital punishment was further consolidated by its recent ratification of the Second Optional Protocol.



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Several countries made interventions during the discussions that followed the presentations by the panellists.

In her concluding remarks, ICDP Commissioner Ruth Dreifuss reiterated that “the abolition of the death penalty is about political leadership.” She said that “death penalty retentionist countries must be isolated and condemned.” She emphasised that “the Second Optional Protocol is the strongest instrument to aim at the global abolition of the death penalty.”

The Side-Event was co-sponsored by Argentina, Belgium, France, Italy, Mexico, Norway, Spain, Switzerland, Turkey and the United Kingdom who are members of ICDP’s Support Group, Moldova and the World Coalition against the Death Penalty.

ICDP thanks all the distinguished participants at the Side-Event for the success of the event and for their important contributions in the discussions relating to the Second Optional Protocol, its relevance, its present and future role in furthering the universal abolition of the death penalty.

Federico Mayor
President of the International Commission
Against the Death Penalty

Background

ICDP was founded in Madrid in October 2010. ICDP is composed of 15 personalities of high international standing from all regions of the world who act with total independence and neutrality and work under its President Mr Federico Mayor.

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 non-governmental organizations to further the abolition of capital punishment worldwide.

The work of the ICDP is supported by a diverse group of 18 states from all regions of the world that are committed to abolition of the death penalty. Its secretariat is based in Geneva.