



25nd Session of the Human Rights Council

Concept Note

High Level Panel Discussion on the Question of the Death Penalty

Date and Venue

5 March 2014, 15:00-18.00 pm, Palais des Nations, Geneva

Background

The reports of the Secretary-General on the question of the death penalty, the latest of which (A/HRC/24/18) highlights the significant developments towards the universal abolition of the death penalty and some noticeable steps towards restricting its use in countries that have retained it, and also reminds those States that still intend to implement the death penalty of the need to protect the rights of those facing the death penalty, in particular, in accordance with the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

Mandate

In Human Rights Council Decision 22/117, adopted in March 2013, the Council acknowledged the interest in holding national and international debates on the question of the death penalty; and decided to convene, at its twenty-fifth session, a high level panel discussion on the question of the death penalty “with the aim of exchanging views on advances, best practices and challenges relating to the abolition of the death penalty and to the introduction of a moratorium on executions, as well as on national debates or processes on whether to abolish the death penalty”.

The Council requested the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) to organize the panel discussion and to liaise with States, relevant United Nations bodies, agencies, treaty bodies, special procedures and regional human rights mechanisms, as well as with parliamentarians, civil society, including non-governmental organizations, and national human rights institutions, with a view to ensuring their participation in the panel discussion. The Council further requested OHCHR to prepare a report on the panel discussion in the form of a summary.

Objectives

Based on the request of the Human Rights Council, the panel discussion aims to:

- (i) Exchange views on advances, best practices and challenges relating to the abolition of the death penalty and to the introduction of a moratorium on executions;
- (ii) Exchange views relating to national debates or processes on whether to abolish the death penalty.

Chair

Mr. Baudelaire Ndong Ella

The President, United Nations Human Rights Council

Video Message

Mr. Ban Ki-Moon

The Secretary General of the United Nations

Opening Remarks

Ms. Navi Pillay

The United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights

Panel

Moderator

H.E Mr. Nicolas Niemtchinow

The Permanent Representative of France at the United Nations Offices in Geneva

Panelists

1. **Mr. Kirk Bloodsworth, Director of Advocacy, Witness to Innocence, USA** (*the first person in USA exonerated from death row by DNA testing in 1993*): Discuss and exchange views on advances, best practices and challenges relating to the abolition of the death penalty and to the introduction of a moratorium on executions from the perspective of a victim of wrongful conviction.
2. **Mr. Valentin Djenontin-Agossou, Minister of Justice and Human Rights, the Republic of Benin**: Discuss and exchange views on advances, best practices and challenges relating to the abolition of the death penalty; and national debates or processes on whether to abolish the death penalty.
3. **Ms. Asma Jahangir, Commissioner, International Commission against the death Penalty** (*former Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary and arbitrary executions*): discuss and exchange views on advances and challenges relating to the abolition of the death penalty and to the introduction of a moratorium on executions in Asia.
4. **Ms. Khadija Rouissi, Vice-President, National Parliament of Morocco** (*Coordinator, Network of Moroccan Parliamentarian against the death penalty*): Share views on advances, best practices and challenges relating to the abolition of the death penalty; and national debates or processes in the Arab region; and discuss the role of parliamentarian for the abolition of the death penalty and the related best practices and challenges.

Format

The sequence of speakers during this panel discussion will be as follows:

1. The High Level Panel discussion shall be chaired by the President of the Human Rights Council and moderated by the Permanent Representative of France to the United Nations in Geneva; and will begin with a video message by the Secretary General of the United Nations and an opening statement by the High Commissioner for Human Rights.
2. The panelists will be given five to seven minutes each to make a presentation, followed by interactive discussions (in two phases), including questions and comments from the floor. Each delegate will take the floor for two minutes maximum.
3. This panel will take place during the High-Level segment. In this sense, an online list of speakers shall be opened on Friday 28 February at 3pm. The inscription will be organized through an online registration system, which will be made available at the following link:

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/OnlineinscriptionHLPanels>

Dignitaries will speak first and delegations taking the floor on behalf of political or regional groups will follow. Other delegations will be given the floor thereafter in the order of inscription on a first come first served basis. The modalities of registration for NGOs and NHRIs will remain unchanged. Those participants inscribed on the list but unable to speak will have the possibility to share their statements on the HRC Extranet.

4. States, national human rights institutions, and non-government organizations are encouraged to intervene in an inter-active way in the debate, through questions and comments, taking into account and reflecting on the interventions of panelists and other participants.

5. Participants are encouraged to share concrete considerations related to the establishment of the moratoriums on the use of the death penalty and its full abolition, in particular practical experiences, challenges and best practices; and exchange views relating to national debates or processes on whether to abolish the death penalty.
6. At the end, panelists will be given three minutes each to make their concluding remarks, followed by final remarks of the Moderator of the Panel and the President of the Council.

Outcome

The expected outcomes of this thematic discussion are:

- States and relevant stakeholders will learn from shared experiences.
- The Council will be better informed of issues relating to advances, best practices and challenges relating to the abolition of the death penalty and to the introduction of a moratorium on executions, as well as on to national debates or processes on whether to abolish the death penalty
- OHCHR and other relevant stakeholders will be better informed of the needs of States in this area.
- OHCHR will prepare a report on the panel discussion in the form of a summary.

Background documents

- Human Rights Council Decision 22/117 on the High Level Panel on the Question of the Death Penalty;
- General Assembly resolutions 62/149 of 18 December 2007, 63/168 of 18 December 2008, 65/206 of 21 December 2010 and 67/176 of 20 December 2012 on the question of a moratorium on the use of the death penalty;
- The Report of the Secretary General on the Question of the Death Penalty to the Human Rights Council A/HRC/24/18.