



International Commission
against the Death Penalty

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Press Release

On 10 and 11 October, the International Commission against the Death Penalty (ICDP) met in Geneva. ICDP organised a series of events and meetings to commemorate its first anniversary which also coincided with the World Day against the Death Penalty. The events officially marked the ICDP's permanent move from Madrid, where it was initially located, to Geneva, the city of human rights.

ICDP was established one year ago in Madrid in order to strengthen the abolitionist trend and to promote, complement and support the activities and actions carried out by the United Nations and other international and regional organizations, governments, civil society and non-governmental organizations which aim to abolish the death penalty.

ICDP, which is chaired by Federico Mayor, is currently composed of 12 members. They are supported and advised by the Support Group comprising 15 countries representing all the regions of the world. The Swiss confederation will be succeeding the government of Spain in assuming the Presidency of the Support Group of the ICDP for the period of October 2011 to October 2012.

On 10 October 2011, the ICDP met with the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Navanethem Pillay, in order to discuss future cooperation and collaboration between the two organizations.

ICDP hosted a *vin d'honneur* which was attended by over 100 Geneva-based representatives of International Governmental Organizations, Permanent Missions, academics, Non-Governmental Organizations in the presence of the representatives of the Swiss Confederation, the Canton and the Municipality of Geneva. President Micheline Calmy-Rey warmly welcomed the ICDP to Geneva and pledged strong support of the government of Switzerland to the International Commission against the Death Penalty.

On the issue of the death penalty in Africa, there was discussion on ICDP's cooperation with the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR) and in particular the ICDP's support of the activities of the Working Group on the Death Penalty of the ACHPR. The eventual goal is to make Africa free of executions. The Commission adopted the decision to support the organization of a conference on the death penalty.

On 13 and 14 October, a member of ICDP will attend a regional conference in Rwanda on the abolition and on the moratorium on executions organized by the Rwandan Government and the Italian

Non-Governmental Organization Hands off Cain. The aim of the conference is to launch a major debate on the need to abolish the death penalty in Africa or at least to impose a moratorium on executions. In Africa many governments maintain longstanding de facto moratoriums on executions even though the death penalty remained in force and death sentences continued to be imposed. ICDP also expressed its hope that the fight for democracy of the Arab Spring will be accompanied by the abolition of the death penalty.

The Commissioners deliberated on the death penalty situation in China, which executes thousands of people every year. The exact figures are not known. There was discussion on how to reduce the scope of the death penalty in China and how to build up contacts, especially with scholars on criminal law, the legal community and the judiciary. ICDP encourages China to publish annual statistics and thereby remove the secrecy surrounding the use of the death penalty.

During the meeting, the ICDP also discussed the issue of the death penalty for drug-related offences. ICDP is concerned about the large proportion of death sentences imposed for drug offences.

From 17 to 19 October, ICDP is co-organizing a conference on the Greater Caribbean and the Death Penalty in Madrid with the Italian Non-Governmental Organization Community of Saint Egidio, the Human Rights Office of the Spanish Ministry of Foreign Affairs and other NGOs and stakeholders. The objective of the conference is to debate the situation of the death penalty in the Greater Caribbean, to adopt strategies, and to establish a Caribbean network against the death penalty.

Geneva, 11 October 2011