

25th Anniversary of the Second Optional Protocol to the ICCPR
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Oral statement by the World Coalition against the Death Penalty
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Introduction

Your excellences, representatives of the governments and of the civil society, ladies and gentlemen good afternoon. First of all allow me to thank the International Commission against the Death Penalty for organizing this event and giving the World Coalition against the Death Penalty the opportunity to talk, on behalf of civil society organisations, about our activities in favour of the global ratification of the Second Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights aiming at the abolition of the death penalty.

The World Coalition against the Death Penalty is an alliance of more than 150 NGOs, bar associations, local authorities and unions; it was created in Rome on 13 May 2002. FIACAT, the NGO for which I am working, is one of the founding members of the Coalition and has been elected as member of its Steering Committee since 2002.

The aim of the World Coalition is to strengthen the international dimension of the fight against the death penalty. Of course, the ultimate objective of the Coalition is to obtain the universal abolition of the death penalty.

To achieve its goal, the World Coalition launched three global campaigns; one of them is the campaign for the ratification of International and regional protocols aimed at abolition of the death penalty which started in 2009.

1. Objectives of the campaign

The World Coalition's first objective was the ratification of the second optional protocol by all the states that have already abolished the death penalty in law.

Thus the campaign targeted specifically countries which were party to the ICCPR, and which have abolished the death penalty domestically.

To reach these goals, the World Coalition organised advocacy missions by members of the coalition in the region in capital cities with its local partners; for instance in Dominican Republic, Salvador, Poland, Bolivia, Latvia or Burundi.

The missions were accompanied by letters sent by all members of the Coalition and a toolkit on the ratification for each target country was prepared by the Secretariat of the Coalition.

A group of Countries "*friends of the protocol*" have remained mobilized and continue to play an essential role throughout the campaign by various means such as diplomatic contacts or recommendations for target countries under review during the Universal Periodic Review process.

The International Commission against the Death Penalty is also an important partner in this campaign.

Members of the Coalition were also asked to talk about the protocol on various occasions. For instance, FIACAT delivers every six months an oral statement on the death penalty during the ordinary sessions of the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights on behalf of the World Coalition against the Death Penalty. In these statements, FIACAT always urges African Union Member States to ratify the Second optional Protocol.

Furthermore, FIACAT always recommends to the United Nations treaty Bodies to urge States under review to ratify the OP2 in its alternative reports to the Committee against Torture or to the Human Rights Committee.

During this first period some target countries of the Coalition ratified the Second optional protocol but some target countries only ratified regional protocols calling for the abolition of the death penalty: **Dominican Republic** ratified the Protocol to the American Convention on Human Rights and **Latvia** ratified the protocol 13 to the European Convention, both in 2012.

Furthermore, **Benin**, which was abolitionist in practice and not in law ratified the second optional protocol to the ICCPR in July 2012.

2. New strategy from 2013

Early 2013, the World Coalition against the Death Penalty made an evaluation of the ratification campaign to clarify its strategy for the years to come.

After this evaluation, the strategy has changed. The idea of the second phase of the ratification campaign was not only focus on the Second Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights but also on regional protocols. The campaign has thus been renamed "*Campaign for the Ratification of International and Regional Protocols Aimed at Abolition of the Death Penalty*".

The list of target countries has also been updated and some countries which are *de facto* abolitionist are now target countries such as Morocco.

From a regional point of view, in Africa the World Coalition has closely followed the progress made by the Working Group on the Death Penalty of the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights for the development of an optional Protocol to the African Charter of Human and Peoples' Rights similar to the European Protocol 13 aiming at abolishing the death penalty. The idea of such a protocol is to give ownership to African Union member states on the fight in favour of the abolition of the death penalty. The Coalition worked last year, in Partnership with the Working Group on the drafting of the protocol during a meeting in Pretoria, South Africa, in July 2013.

More than 30 African Union member states will gather in Benin from 2 to 4 July 2014 to talk about this draft protocol and to formally adopt it and send it to the African Commission. Then we are expecting the protocol to be adopted by the African Commission during its 56th Ordinary session in October in Niamey (Niger) and then adopted by the Conference of the Head of States of the African Union in Addis Ababa in January 2015. It will then be open to ratification.

Conclusion

To conclude, this new strategy has been really fruitful. Our goal was to reach 80 ratifications for the celebration of the 25th anniversary of the second optional protocol.

Guinea Bissau acceded to the Protocol on September 2013, **Gabon, Salvador** and **Poland** in April 2014; two of these countries were targeted by the World Coalition in 2013-2014.

Thus, since last April, 81 countries out of 98 abolitionist countries in law have ratified the protocol and we expect to reach new ratifications before December (Madagascar, Angola, Cote d'Ivoire...)

But the campaign is still not that easy because some abolitionist countries still don't see why they should ratify such a protocol. For instance, I received a letter last May from the Ministry of Foreign affair of Burundi stating that because Burundi has already abolished the death penalty, the ratification of the Protocol is pointless / inappropriate.

The Coalition has now to assign new objectives.