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**International Commission
against the Death Penalty**

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Statement by the International Commission against the Death Penalty: Kazakhstan ratifies the Second Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights

The International Commission against the Death Penalty (ICDP or Commission) welcomes the ratification by the Republic of Kazakhstan to the Second Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (Protocol), aiming at the abolition of the death penalty following the signature by President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev. His signature, which was announced by a notice in the presidential website on 2 January 2021, affirmed the 29 December 2020 vote in the Parliament in favour of ratification of the Second Optional Protocol, making the country the 88th State Party to this Protocol. Earlier, Kazakhstan became a State Signatory to the Protocol on 23 September 2020.

The ratification of the Second Optional Protocol followed a proposal by President Tokayev on 20 December 2019, in his capacity as Chair of the National Council of Public Trust, instructing the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to start procedures on accession to the Second Optional Protocol, which was followed up by a Presidential Decree, dated 14 July 2020, which authorized “the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Kazakhstan, Tleuberdi Mukhtar Beskenuly, on behalf of the Republic of Kazakhstan, to sign the Second Optional Protocol...” The country has had an official moratorium on the death penalty following then-President Nursultan Nazarbayev’s decree of a moratorium on executions on December 17, 2003. Life imprisonment was introduced in 2004 as an alternative punishment. In May 2007, Kazakhstan amended its Constitution abolishing the death penalty for all crimes except terrorist acts that cause loss of human life and exceptionally grave crimes committed during wartime.

“I join ICDP Commissioners and our Support Group of Member-States in congratulating President Tokayev and his administration for the truly welcome ratification by Kazakhstan of the Second Optional Protocol. By doing so, Kazakhstan has made a historic international commitment to end the death penalty during peacetime and for the ICDP, this is especially significant as the country is an important Member-State of the Commission. This decision is a momentous step not just for the country but also for the Central Asia region as it moves towards a death penalty-free zone. I am also very happy as the initial announcement by President Tokayev came a month after a very productive meeting of Geneva-based Permanent Representatives of the Central Asian region and Mongolia on making the region a death penalty-free zone, which was co-organized by the ICDP in November 2019,” said ICDP President Judge Navi Pillay.

Background

Composed of 22 Commissioners, who are persons of high international standing and who represent all regions of the world, ICDP acts with total independence and neutrality and works 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. The Commission 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.

ICDP works with the United Nations and other international and regional organizations, governments and nongovernmental organizations to further the abolition of capital punishments worldwide. The work of ICDP is supported by a diverse group of 22 Member-States and 2 Observer States from all parts of the world that are committed to the abolition of the death penalty. Its Secretariat is based in Madrid.