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ICDP 06/2026

**International Commission
against the Death Penalty**

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North-South Prize
of the Council of Europe

**Statement by the International Commission against the Death Penalty: ICDP
Mission to Australia for meetings to initiate discussions for the South Pacific
region as a Zone Free of the Death Penalty**

The International Commission against the Death Penalty (ICDP or Commission) held a high-level mission to Australia from 29 April to 1 May 2026 to participate in events, which focused on initiating efforts to establish the South Pacific as a region free of the death penalty. The ICDP delegation was led by Commissioners Helen Clark, former Prime Minister of New Zealand, and Tsakhia Elbegdorj, former President of Mongolia, who were accompanied by Co-Executive Directors Rajiv Narayan and Asunta Vivó Cavaller.

On 30 April, ICDP convened a high-level regional preparatory meeting at the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) in Canberra with senior South Pacific diplomats. The meeting provided an initial forum to reflect on the extraordinary shared accomplishment of the South Pacific on the respect, protection and fulfilment of the fundamental human right to life. Of the eighteen Pacific Island Forum States, seventeen have abolished the death penalty in law, and the region is free of executions with the last known execution being carried out in Tonga in 1982. Moreover, the vast majority of countries in the region have consistently supported the UN General Assembly resolution on a moratorium on the death penalty.

The meeting in Canberra provided an opportunity to share national experiences, and reflect on pathways toward formal abolition. Participants considered what it could mean to give formal expression on the world stage to the near universal abolition of the death penalty in the region, including exploring possibilities of establishing the South Pacific as a death penalty-free zone.

As ICDP Commissioner Helen Clark noted, "The South Pacific has demonstrated for over four decades that security and justice do not require the taking of human life. At a time when execution numbers are rising sharply in parts of the world, the South Pacific stands out as a beacon of what is possible. Declaring a death penalty-free zone would give formal expression to what the region already is, and I am honoured to be part of this conversation. What we can do in this meeting is to launch the boat for such a declaration".

The preparatory meeting was followed by a briefing for diplomatic representatives from ICDP's Support Group of countries. It was opened by the Hon. Mark Dreyfus KC MP, Australia's Special Envoy for International Human Rights. ICDP Commissioners and Secretariat presented the Commission's work, its regional death penalty-free initiatives, including the work on Central Asia + Mongolia, the Community of Portuguese Language-speaking countries, and the proposal for the South Pacific, where we had just held a preparatory meeting.

ICDP Commissioner Elbegdorj, who led abolition of the death penalty as President of Mongolia, shared his personal testimony of what political leadership can achieve in advancing abolition, and spoke on his role in leading the Commission's regional initiative on Central Asia + Mongolia and related that to the South Pacific initiative.

The ICDP delegation also held a bilateral meeting with Hon. Mark Dreyfus and senior Australian Government Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) officials,





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including Ms Angela Robinson, First Assistant Secretary for Multilateral Policy and Human Rights, Ms Lara Nassau, Assistant Secretary for Human Rights, and Mr Samuel Lucas, Director of the Multilateral Human Rights Section, to discuss opportunities for continued collaboration in support of death penalty abolition in the region and beyond.

The Commission expresses its deep gratitude to DFAT for its support, and to all senior diplomatic representatives of the South Pacific region and ICDP's Support Group who participated in the meetings in Canberra. Australia's longstanding commitment to the abolition of the death penalty — as a member of the ICDP Support Group and as a regional leader on human rights — has been invaluable to the success of this initiative.

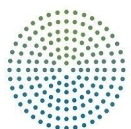
ICDP looks forward to continued engagement with South Pacific countries and to encouraging the region to take steps toward formalising what it has already achieved in practice: a South Pacific region free of the death penalty.

Background

The activities of ICDP which was established in 2010, are led by 28 high-level Commissioners from all regions of the world, under the presidency of Judge Navi Pillay, former United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. The Commissioners include four former Presidents, six former Prime Ministers, ten Ministers, two U.S. Governors, ten Parliamentarians, six Judges, and seven senior UN officials — including three former UN High Commissioners for Human Rights. The work of ICDP is supported by a geographically diverse Support Group of 24 Member States who are committed to the abolition of the death penalty. Its Secretariat is based in Madrid and is responsible for the day-to-day work of the Commission.

The Commission promotes the abolition of capital punishment in law in States which observe a de facto moratorium on the use of the death penalty and promotes moratoria on executions in States which retain capital punishment.

ICDP works with the United Nations and other international and regional organizations, governments, and nongovernmental organizations to advocate for the worldwide abolition of the death penalty.



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