

**FINAL DECLARATION**  
**7<sup>TH</sup> World Congress Against the Death Penalty**  
**Brussels, 1<sup>st</sup> March 2019**

We,

The participants of the 7<sup>th</sup> World Congress Against the Death Penalty, organized in Brussels from February 26 to March 1st, 2019, by the organization Ensemble Contre la Peine de Mort (ECPM) under the sponsorship of Belgium, the European Union, European Parliament, Swiss Confederation and Norway, in partnership with the World Coalition Against the Death Penalty, hereby:

**ADOPT** the present declaration following four days of intense debates, exchanges of experiences, testimonies, cultural events;

**WELCOME:**

- the abolitionist movement's expansion in a world where more than 2/3 of countries have abolished the death penalty in law or in practice and where 121 countries, the highest number ever, voted in favor of the UNGA moratorium resolution in December 2018;
- the abolition of the death penalty in 3 countries since the Oslo World Congress in 2016: abolition for ordinary crimes in Burkina Faso and Guatemala and abolition for all crimes in Guinea, as well as the decision of the Supreme Court of the State of Washington in the USA, that found the death penalty unconstitutional;
- the revision of catechism of the Catholic Church stating that the death penalty is 'inadmissible';
- the commitments taken during the opening ceremony of the 7<sup>th</sup> Congress by the Gambia to abolish the death penalty in its constitution, by the Republic of the Congo and Guinea to ratify the Second Optional Protocol to the ICCPR and to support the draft Additional Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights for abolition, by Burkina Faso to extend the abolition of the death penalty from ordinary crimes to all crimes, and by Morocco to reform the penal code to reduce the number of crimes punishable by death;

**BUT ARE CONCERNED:**

- that the retention of the death penalty is used as a pretext by some governments such as Egypt, where 9 people were executed on 20 February, to counter-terrorism and mute dissenting voices;
- that 56 countries and territories are retentionists, such as China, Iran, Iraq, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia and the USA and that in many cases the death penalty is applied arbitrarily;
- that retentionist countries continue to sentence to death and execute juveniles, such as Iran, and people with intellectual and psychosocial disabilities, including Japan and Taiwan;
- that it is applied in a way that disproportionately impacts people from ethnic, racial, or religious minorities or from disadvantaged socio-economic background, or on the grounds of sexual orientation or gender-based discrimination;
- that conditions on death row violate human dignity and are a cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment.

## **UNDERLINING THE NECESSITY TO TAKE FURTHER SIGNIFICANT STEPS TOWARDS THE COMPLETE AND UNIVERSAL ABOLITION OF THE DEATH PENALTY,**

### **WE CALL UPON:**

- **Actors from the private sector to join massively the call initiated by civil society all over the world in favor of the abolition of the death penalty;**
- **African countries to make Africa an abolitionist continent;**
- **Retentionist countries to engage in concrete reforms to reduce the scope of the death penalty in view of its abolition;**
- **Abolitionist countries to support as a matter of principle their citizens facing the death penalty everywhere in the world, whatever the crime they are judged for;**

### **WE ENCOURAGE**

#### **International and Regional Intergovernmental Organizations:**

- to continue and intensify their cooperation with states and civil society to promote the universal abolition of the death penalty;
- to continue and intensify their position for abolition across all UN bodies, including in the discussions between the UNODC and all stakeholders;
- to continue and systematically address the issue of the death penalty in the work done by UN special rapporteurs, especially on terrorism, executions, torture, migrants, and extreme poverty;

#### **Retentionist states to commit:**

- to abolish the mandatory death penalty where it exists and promote alternative sentences which recognize each person's ability to make amends;
- to implement the Convention on the Rights of the Child, for its 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2019, by abolishing the death penalty for juveniles below the age of 18 at the time of the crime for which they have been convicted, and by systematically giving them the benefit of the doubt if there is no official record of their age and date of birth;
- to collect and publish regular, reliable and independent information on the manner in which they use the death penalty, disaggregated by sex, age, nationality and race, and on the state of public opinion on the death penalty;
- to take the path toward the abolition of capital punishment by implementing a moratorium on death sentences and executions, in compliance with the resolution for a moratorium on the use of the death penalty voted by the General Assembly of the United Nations since 2007, and to join the 86 countries that have already ratified the Second Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights;
- to guarantee effective legal aid and an effective and reliable investigation system for all people facing the death penalty;

#### **Abolitionist states:**

- to vehemently condemn the use of the death penalty and systematically raise this issue in the framework of their diplomatic and economic relations with retentionist countries;
- to make the financial aid granted to the international "war on drugs" conditional to sufficient guarantees that those funds will not be used in any manner to enforce the death penalty;
- to actively oppose the use of the death penalty in the fight against terrorism to promote and respect human rights;
- to support actors in civil society working in favor of abolition;
- to cosponsor and vote in favor of the UNGA resolution calling for a universal moratorium on capital punishment in 2020;

- to ratify the Second Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights;
- to commit not to reintroduce the death penalty and not to resume executions;

**Parliamentarians and National Human Rights Institutions (NHRIs):**

- from across the world to gather in regional, national, and international networks to carry the abolitionist debate into the heart of their institutions;
- from abolitionist states to support their colleagues from retentionist states, including to propose abolitionist bills;
- to systematically add questions on the death penalty to their agendas;
- to encourage their states to abolish the death penalty;

**Legal professionals:**

- for lawyers, to seek training and cooperate in order to better defend clients facing the death penalty;
- for prosecutors not to ask for imposition of the death penalty, in the name of justice;
- for judges to exercise their power of discretion to not impose any death sentences and to encourage non-professional juries to do the same;
- for bar associations, to join the call of the Paris Bar and the International Association of Lawyers (UIA) by signing the Resolution on the Death Penalty and the Conditions of Detention and Treatment of Persons Sentenced to Death;

**Private sector and cultural actors:**

- to recognize that capital punishment is an archaic and degrading punishment, harmful to the harmonious development of the economy, tourism, and cultural exchanges;
- to express preference to invest on countries that do not use the death penalty;
- to incorporate in existing business and human rights policies, advocacy in favor or abolition;

**Academia:**

- to carry out more research on the death penalty, including to make women on death row visible and to demystify arguments used to retain the death penalty, including public opinion, deterrence, terrorism;
- to join the International Network of Universities against the Death Penalty and REPECAP;
- to join forces with civil society and jointly establish law clinics;

**Abolitionist actors from civil society:**

- to carry out awareness-raising and educational campaigns on abolition for the public, political decision-makers, and students, joining the international network for education;
- to participating in the annual World Day Against the Death Penalty on 10 October and in the “Cities for Life” on 30 November;
- to join forces with other rights' movements, including women's rights movements and children rights movements;
- to act together, by joining the World Coalition Against the Death Penalty, to strengthen abolitionist collaborations.

Adopted by Acclamation in Brussels on 1st March 2019