

UNITED NATIONS



NATIONS UNIES

THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

A handwritten signature in pink ink, appearing to be 'Ban Ki-moon', located to the right of the text 'THE SECRETARY-GENERAL'.

**REMARKS AT PANEL ON “MOVING AWAY
FROM THE DEATH PENALTY AND HALTING
DISCRIMINATION AGAINST MARGINALIZED GROUPS”**

New York, 24 April 2014

11:00

Assistant Secretary-General Ivan Simonovic,
Your Excellencies, Ambassador Sebastiano Cardi *Italy*
and Deputy Permanent Representative Eduardo Gálvez, *Chile*
Distinguished panellists,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I thank the Office of the High Commissioner
for Human Rights for organizing this important event.

Since the General Assembly's landmark vote in 2007
calling for a worldwide moratorium on the death penalty,
the trend against capital punishment has become stronger.

An estimated 160 countries have either abolished the death penalty or no longer practice it.

Most recently, Pakistan, the United Arab Emirates and the State of Washington in the United States decided to either establish a moratorium or to suspend executions.

Earlier this month, Gabon and El Salvador acceded to the Second Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights aiming at the abolition of the death penalty.

I welcome these developments. But I deplore the fact that many States still execute people with little regard to due process. I am also deeply concerned that some States with long-standing de facto moratoriums have suddenly resumed executions, or are considering reintroduction of the death penalty in their legislation.

The right to life is the most fundamental of all human rights. The taking of life is too irreversible for one human being to inflict it on another.

In death penalty cases, the odds are often stacked against the poor, ethnic minorities and other minority groups, who often lack access to effective legal representation -- which is frequently the most important factor in determining whether a defendant will receive the death penalty.

In some States, the race of the victim and the race of the defendant in capital cases are also major factors in determining who is sentenced to death.

The carrying out of the death penalty on persons with a mental disability is prohibited but still takes place.

Sentencing persons to death in absentia, the lack of due process and secret executions continue to mar the practices of those states that still implement the death penalty.

In addition, the use of the death penalty for non-violent acts, including sexual relations between consenting adults, is a violation of international human rights law.

Such provisions may further encourage violence and discrimination against LGBT persons.

Foreign nationals and migrant workers also remain disproportionately affected.

These discriminatory practices in the imposition of the death penalty reinforce even further the calls for its universal abolition.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I call on all States that have not yet done so to ratify the Second Optional Protocol of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights aiming at the abolition of the death penalty.

As we mark the Protocol's 25th anniversary in New York later this year, let us proclaim again our utter opposition to the death penalty.

It is cruel because it is final and because it disproportionately targets disadvantaged groups.

Let us all do our utmost to put a final stop to this cruel and inhumane practice once and for all.

Thank you.

[END]