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Statement on the constitution of the International Commission against the Death Penalty

As an initiative of the Spanish Government, an International Commission against the Death Penalty was established today in Madrid as part of the celebrations of World Day against the Death Penalty.

The death penalty is the ultimate denial of human rights. It violates the right to life and the right not to be subjected to cruel, inhuman and degrading punishment, proclaimed in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

The International Commission is chaired by Federico Mayor Zaragoza and initially composed of the personalities listed in the annex to this Declaration.

The International Commission has the support and advice from the following countries: Argentina, Dominican Republic, France, Italy, Kazakhstan, Mexico, Mongolia, Philippines, Portugal, South Africa, Spain, Switzerland and Turkey.

The International Commission is created at the time where there is a strong and continuing trend towards abolition of the death penalty in all regions of the world, as highlighted in the latest report of UN Secretary-General of 15 August 2010 on "moratoriums on the use of the death penalty".

In fact today more than two thirds of the member countries of the UN have abolished the death penalty in law or in practice. But unfortunately there are still many countries which maintain the death penalty in their legislation, and therefore it is necessary to intensify all efforts until its universal abolition.

The International Commission is created to join all the efforts in favour of abolishing the death penalty being carried out by civil society, United Nations and other International and Regional Organizations as well as political leaders of the world. The International Commission will work with all of them in close cooperation with the ultimate goal of achieving the total abolition of this punishment.

The International Commission reminds that the Statute of the International Criminal Court and the International Criminal Tribunals have excluded the death penalty from the punishments which can be imposed for the extremely grave crimes such as genocide and other crimes against humanity.

The International Commission shall have the following objectives:

-Obtain the universal abolition of the death penalty: In this perspective, promote the abolition of the death penalty in legislation in those countries carefully considered, in particularly in the legislation of the countries that apply a de facto moratorium on the use of the death penalty.

-Promote the establishment of a moratorium on the use and the imposition of the death penalty in all regions of the world, allowing the most widespread and effective implementation of a universal moratorium on the horizon of 2015, with a view to its total abolition.

-Solicit the stop of executions in the cases where International Law prohibits or restricts explicitly its application.

To achieve these objectives, the Commission will carry out the following activities on a strategic and selective manner:

-Collaborate and intervene before high representatives and personalities of specific countries, along with representatives of international organizations and NGOs.

- Make appeals and statement on matters of concern relating to the abolition of the death penalty.

-Participate in conferences and seminars, as well as campaigns to mobilize public opinion.

-Dissemination of information and presentation of papers at international forums.

-Promote intellectual and artistic works which favour the abolition of the death penalty.

At the time of its establishment, the International Commission declares its firm determination to contribute with its work to promote, complement or support any action which aims to abolish the death penalty in the world.

Madrid, 7 October 2010