CALL BY THE NHRIS TO STRENGTHEN AND BROADEN THE FIGHT AGAINST THE DEATH PENALTY

The World Congress is a high point of mobilisation for the fight of the international abolitionist movement against the death penalty. This 7th Congress, by its influence, the debates it enabled, in particular by organising opportunities to exchange with high-level representatives of de jure or de facto abolitionist countries, intergovernmental and non-governmental organisations, is an important step in the process leading to the universal abolition of the death penalty.

Considering that abolition is a global trend since 144 countries and territories have already abolished the death penalty;

We are undoubtedly witnessing a decisive historical period in the long abolitionist struggle.

Noting nevertheless that the situation is contrasted, with more than 20,000 people still on death row around the world, and countries that are applying or considering reintroducing the death penalty into their legal arsenal.

We,

Presidents and representatives of National Human Rights Institutions (NHRIs) from eleven (11) countries, from Cameroon, Côte d’Ivoire, Central African Republic, Democratic Republic of Congo, Indonesia, Liberia, Mali, Morocco, Niger, The Philippines, Tunisia, having actively participated in the work of the 7th World Congress held in Brussels from February 26 to March 1, 2109, adopt a joint declaration, following rich and intense exchanges and sharing of experiences, on the current challenges related to the abolitionist struggle at the international and regional levels.

National Human Rights Institutions (NHRIs) have a mandate to protect and promote human rights. The issue of the abolition of the death penalty and related issues, such as the right to a fair trial and conditions of detention, fall within this mandate.

Based on this observation and in line with similar previous declarations (Oslo 2016, Rabat 2017), we wish to plead in favour of intensifying abolitionist action, relying on all levers, in particular by inaugurating a new phase in favour of a better involvement of NHRIs and a stronger articulation of their action with governmental authorities, parliaments and non-governmental civil society organisations.

In this perspective, it is necessary to work towards the implementation of two preconditions: on the one hand, that NHRIs, in accordance with the Paris Principles, can benefit from the powers and means guaranteeing them autonomy and legitimacy to bring the abolition of the death penalty to governments and parliaments, and on the other hand, that NHRIs include the abolition of the death penalty among their priority areas of intervention.

This new stage is based on the following recommendations:

- Ensure that the abolition of the death penalty is on the agenda of the working meetings of National Human Rights Institutions, whether it be within the framework of GANHRI or within regional networks.
• Establish within NHRI networks, particularly at a regional level, a working group on the death penalty that will enable NHRI to pool their expertise and act in a coordinated manner to promote abolition.

NHRI, in accordance with their prerogatives, must:
• Act more effectively, in order to make recommendations to governments and parliaments for constitutional or legislative reforms leading to abolition, or to a moratorium on executions or to reduce the number of crimes punishable by the death penalty.
• Monitor and advocate with governments to harmonise national laws, regulations and practices with international human rights instruments.
• Encourage ratification of or accession to these instruments and ensure their implementation, including ratification of the Second Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights aiming for the abolition of the death penalty (OP2) and work towards the adoption of the Resolution on the establishment of a moratorium on executions.
• Make recommendations on the issue of the death penalty at the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) by the States concerned.
• Document and collect data on the situation of death row prisoners from their missions to visit prisons and assess their situation.
• Involve civil society and abolitionist movement actors, by promoting the creation of a multi-stakeholder network (civil society, parliamentarians, lawyers, media, youth, religious and community leaders) to advance on the path to abolition, in accordance with a recommendation made by the World Forum on Human Rights (WFDH) held in November 2014 in Marrakech.
• Encourage parliamentary initiatives and debates on the abolition of the death penalty, in particular by supporting the creation of abolitionist networks within parliaments.
• Promote public awareness and reflection on alternatives to the death penalty and contribute to education on abolition.