

Human Rights Council – 42nd session

Item 3: General Debate
13 September 2019

Australian Statement

This year marks 30 years since the adoption of the Second Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), aiming at the abolition of the death penalty.

Since its adoption, the world has experienced a steady and welcome trend towards abolition. Some states have abolished the death penalty by removing it from domestic legislation. Others have ratified the Second Optional Protocol to signal their commitment. And some have introduced formal moratoria on executions. All these moves are to be applauded. They are signs of progress towards a world free of the death penalty.

Despite these positive steps, more than 15 countries have used this most final and unforgiving punishment this year. States give many reasons for their use of the death penalty. They say the public supports it, and yet research shows that public support for the death penalty inevitably wanes after abolition. They say it deters crime, and yet there is no compelling evidence to suggest this is the case. They say it is their sovereign right to manage their own justice systems. Indeed; and yet sovereignty does not absolve states of their obligations under international law.

We deplore the death penalty in all circumstances, and most particularly as a sentence for non-violent conduct, such as consensual same-sex relations, blasphemy, economic crimes and drugs offences.

Australia opposes the death penalty for all people, in all circumstances. We call on all states to continue progress towards global abolition and to support efforts by those leaders moving their communities towards a death penalty-free future.

257 Words