

Press Release

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Council of Europe participates in 3rd World Congress against the death penalty

Strasbourg, 01.02.2007 – Deeply opposed to capital punishment, Council of Europe representatives are convinced that "the death penalty is a fatal form of injustice" and are participating in the 3rd World Congress against the death penalty in Paris from 1-3 February 2007.

Council of Europe Parliamentary Assembly President René van der Linden, and Thomas Hammarberg, Council of Europe Human Rights Commissioner, joined voices to support the *Coalition against the death penalty* in speeches at the opening ceremony (Thursday 1 February at 10 am). Mr. Hammarberg will also take part in a round table in the afternoon.

Council of Europe Secretary General Terry Davis will deliver a speech during a solemn ceremony on Saturday, 3 February at the Bastille Opera.

Note to Editors

At the heart of the Council of Europe machinery stands the European Convention on Human Rights, serving as a safeguard for everyone living on European territory. The Convention was adopted in 1950. The right to life was the first substantive article, stating that everyone's life shall be protected by law. This article was completed by two protocols to the Convention.

In 1980, the Council of Europe Parliamentary Assembly, made up of parliamentarians from all member states, launched a proposal that led to the introduction, in 1983, of Protocol no. 6 to the Convention. Protocol no. 6 outlaws the death penalty without conditions in times of peace. Since 1994, the Assembly created the condition for all Council of Europe members to impose a moratorium on all executions, accompanied by a commitment to sign and ratify the protocol within a period of one to three years. As of 10 January 2007, all Council of Europe member states – except Russia – have ratified the protocol.

At the Ministerial Conference on Human Rights, held in Rome in November 2000, the Ministers of Council of Europe member states adopted a resolution expressing support for a new protocol on the abolition of the death penalty in time of war. This issue was finally addressed in Protocol No. 13 to the European Convention on Human Rights, which abolishes the death penalty in all circumstances. Protocol No. 13 has been ratified by 37 member states: eight have signed but not yet ratified (Albania, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Spain, France, Italy, Lithuania, Poland). The Russian Federation has not yet signed. The Council of Europe encourages the United States and Japan – states holding observer status with the Council of Europe – to abolish the death penalty.

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