

46th session of the Human Rights Council

Biennial high-level panel discussion on the question of the death penalty

23 February 2021

Delivered by H.E. Ambassador Peter Matt, Permanent Representative of the Principality of Liechtenstein

Madam President,

I deliver this statement on behalf of Austria, Slovenia, Switzerland, and my own delegation Liechtenstein.

The death penalty is a violation of the right to life and human dignity and we use the opportunity of this high-level panel to reiterate our strong condemnation of capital punishment in all circumstances and for all cases. The death penalty has no place in the twenty-first century and we will continue to advocate for its worldwide abolition in law and in practice.

Apart from the apparent violation of the right to life, which is non-derogable in all circumstances, the Human Rights Council has recognised that all methods of capital punishment can inflict inordinate pain and suffering. As underlined by an emerging consensus among States, the imposition and execution of the death penalty can therefore amount to torture and other cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment or punishment. We underline that there is no evidence that the death penalty deters crime more effectively than any other form of punishment.

We welcome the global trend towards a universal and comprehensive moratorium on the execution of the death penalty and strongly call upon all States to move towards a universal abolition of the practice. We would furthermore like to recall that the ICCPR reaffirms in Article 6, paragraph 6 that States parties that are not yet totally abolitionist should be on an irrevocable path towards complete eradication of the death penalty in the foreseeable future.

As States take steps in this direction, it is critical that any imposition or execution of the death penalty meets the minimum-standards and is not applied in a discriminatory way. The death penalty must be strictly limited to the most serious crimes involving intentional killing. We are deeply concerned by laws providing for the death penalty for other conduct. Further, capital punishment must not be applied on minors, pregnant women or persons with a mental disability

We strongly urge states to abide by international human rights law in this matter.

Thank you Madam President.