

**Statement adopted by the Committee on Legal Affairs and Human Rights on the occasion of the 15th World Day against the Death Penalty (10 October 2017)**

On the occasion of the 15th World Day against the Death Penalty (10 October 2017), the Committee reaffirms its commitment to the right to life and reiterates that capital punishment is cruel, inhuman and degrading.

Although over two thirds (141) of the world's countries have abolished the death penalty in law or have not applied it for at least 10 years, more than a thousand people are executed every year. The death penalty is still used in over 50 countries, including in countries that have co-operation status with the Council of Europe. The Committee strongly condemns the executions carried out this year in Belarus, the United States, Japan, Jordan and the Palestinian Authority. Despite the fact that Turkey abolished the death penalty in 2004, it notes with concern that the re-introduction of the death penalty has been discussed publicly since the coup attempt on 15 July 2016.

The Committee also reiterates that the commitment to abolish the death penalty is one of the conditions for obtaining partner for democracy status with the Parliamentary Assembly. Consequently, it asks the parliaments of Jordan, Morocco and the Palestinian Authority to make further commitments in this regard. The Committee is also concerned by the fact that the systematic use of the death penalty in Belarus is continuing to hinder the establishment of closer ties between this state and our Organisation, as noted by the Assembly in Resolution 2172 (2017).

This year's World Day against the Death Penalty focuses on the use of the death sentence against the most vulnerable. The Committee laments the fact that this punishment is often used in a discriminatory manner against persons lacking the social and economic resources to defend themselves in court. It reiterates that the right to a fair trial is a fundamental right, regardless of the defendant's social status.

The Committee reaffirms its commitment in the fight to secure the universal abolition of this inhumane punishment. It calls on members of parliament to make further commitments in this regard by raising the issue in public debates and during their exchanges with the authorities of states that have not abolished the death penalty. The Committee also reaffirms its support for civil society action in this field.