

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

**71st Session of the United Nations General Assembly
Agenda item 126 (I) – Cooperation between the United Nations and
the Council of Europe**

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of the Council of Europe**

This year, for the tenth time, your Assembly adopts a Resolution on Cooperation between the United Nations and the Council of Europe. The first ever such Resolution, adopted in October 2000, contained 11 paragraphs. This year's draft contains nearly 30. This is also a qualitative jump; we co-operate on many more issues now.

The United Nations is a major partner for the Council of Europe and an ideal platform for global outreach. We are working closely with a large number of UN bodies. The universality of our values constitutes the basis of our co-operation.

The relations between our organisations are focused on, but not limited to human rights in a broad sense. Emphasis is given to co-operation with the Human Rights Council, in particular in the framework of the Universal Periodic Review to which the Council of Europe contributes regularly and actively as regards its member states.

We see a broad synergy between the development of the jurisprudence of the European Court of Human Rights and the quasi-jurisprudence of the UN Treaty Bodies, as well as the guidance emanating from Special Procedures Mandates Holders and the Universal Periodic Review. In spite of slight differences, the overall vector goes in the same direction:

- addressing new challenges arising from new technologies (for instance in the area of information technology);
- challenges emerging due to changes in our societies, such as the terrorist threat and the need to respect human rights while tackling terrorism: and
- a shared reflection of the human rights community's increased sensitivity to the rights of various groups at risk, such as the Roma, persons with psychosocial and intellectual disabilities, or migrants in an irregular situation.

After these general considerations, let me address the particular issue of the death penalty.

The Council of Europe takes great pride in having been a driving force in making the European continent death penalty-free for more than 800 million people.

Two treaties have been central to this: Protocol No. 6 to the European Convention on Human Rights, which prohibits the death penalty in times of peace, and Protocol No. 13 which prohibits it in all circumstances. In the last 19 years, no death sentence has been carried out on the territories of our 47 member states. Let me remind you that Belarus, the only European state which carries out capital punishment, is not member of the Council of Europe.

In 2010, the European Court of Human Rights qualified the death penalty as inhuman and degrading treatment regardless of the circumstances under which it has been imposed or executed.

We are proud of these developments. However, three member states have still to meet their accession commitments and ratify these instruments.

At the global level, we are pleased to note that today, 140 countries around the world have abolished the death penalty in legislation or practice. It is a gradual but still committed shift towards the elimination of capital punishment.

On the other hand there has been a spike in executions, albeit in a limited number of countries. And there has been a resumption of executions in several other countries as well as an increase in executions for drug offences, including of minors.

This is why the Council of Europe will remain attentive and proactive, and we will do so in two general directions.

The first is with regard to our own member states. The second is at the global level.

We think that the legal framework adopted by the Council of Europe, as interpreted by the case-law of the Court, makes the abolition of the death penalty legally irreversible. However, it remains very important how citizens adopt and come to share the values behind abolition. Therefore we should invest more in long-term education - especially of children and young people - and present the case for abolition as an integral part of the broader political and social objective of a just, humane and democratic society. It is an issue of fundamental human rights.

In respect of the global dimension, in September of this year, the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe decided to place emphasis on its contribution to the biennial draft Resolution on a “Global moratorium on the use of the death penalty”. In this respect we will also continue to work with the European Union.

I do believe that there is scope to deepen and expand this co-operation into concerted policy action aimed at supporting efforts for a global moratorium, and also into

actions with regard to particularly unacceptable forms of capital punishment.

Finally I would like to thank the delegation of Estonia for having promoted the relevant Resolution and also those who joined as co-sponsors.