

PGA Round-Table on death penalty abolition and the Diplomatic Community

Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, May 4, 2015

Speech on abolition of death penalty by H.E. Luigi Scotto, Italian Ambassador to Tanzania

I would like to take this opportunity to preliminarily offer my greatest congratulations on the International Secretariat and National Committees of PGA as well as Tanzanian human rights organizations for the commendable efforts made to strengthening mobilization and fostering initiatives and processes towards abolition.

Concurrently, the today's reception offers me the opportunity to reiterate the Italian position in the battle for the moratorium that our country considers to be a priority objective to be achieved within a global process that, hopefully one day might lead to the abolition of death penalty in every nation in the world.

Italy maintains a firm and principled stand against the death penalty by applying all diplomatic means to advance the cause of its abolition. The proactive role of Italy in the European and international fora has made our country an actor capable of effectively communicating with governments, opinion leaders, non-governmental organizations and civil society, both bilaterally, and within international institutions.

At Italy's instigation, the UN moratorium on the death penalty resolution was presented by the EU in partnership with eight co-author member States to the General Assembly of the United Nations, calling for general suspension of capital punishment throughout the world. On 18 December 2007, the General Assembly voted 104 to 54 in favour of the resolution, with 29 abstentions (as well as 5 absent at the time of the vote). Italy had proposed and sponsored this resolution.

Since then on, there has been a growing international momentum towards abolition of the death penalty. Over the years, the resolution has gained more and more support and is now cosponsored by 94 States.

On December 18, 2014, the UN General Assembly reaffirmed for the fifth time since 2007 its wide support for the resolution, showing that the trend towards abolition is irreversible. The Resolution was indeed passed with a record 117 votes in favour, 38 against, 34 abstentions and four absent.

In the past two decades we have, therefore, seen a significant rise in the number of countries becoming abolitionist, and we are keen to see this trend continue. Our goal is to further increase the number of abolitionist countries, or countries such as Tanzania with a (*de facto or de jure*) moratorium on the use of the death penalty; further restrictions on the use of the death penalty in retentions countries such as Uganda and reductions in the numbers of executions; and to ensure EU minimum standards are met in countries which retain the death penalty.

Italy also calls on States that have abolished the death penalty not to reintroduce it.

It is the longstanding policy of Italy to oppose the death penalty in all circumstances as a matter of principle because we consider that its use undermines human dignity, that there is no conclusive evidence of its deterrent value, and that any miscarriage of justice leading to its imposition is irreversible and irreparable.