

**Speech by Dr. Sandro Calvani,**  
United Nations Representative  
for Drug Control and Crime Prevention in East Asia and the Pacific at  
*The Hearing on Human Rights in the Framework of Punishment for Drug Crimes*  
Monday 28 October 2002, UN Conference Centre, Bangkok

**"No silence on death"**

It is a great pleasure for me to have all of you at this Hearing on Human Rights in the Framework of Punishment for Drug Crimes.

I would like to thank all the speakers: Khun Srirak Plipat, Director of Amnesty International Thailand; Khun Wanchai Roujanavong of Fight Against Child Exploitation, also from the Office of Attorney General; Khun Mark Thamthai, President of Philosophy and Religion Society of Thailand; Prof. Apirat Petchsiri, Professor at Chulalongkorn University; Khun Annop Chu-Bamrung, Professor at Kirk University; and Khun Piyapan Bing-Muang, Police Colonel of the Royal Thai Police.

I would also like to thank Mr Nicolas Howen, Representative of High Commissioner for Human Rights, for acting as a moderator of this discussion.

Death penalty is literally the capital punishment and an issue drawing a great deal of attention of the civil society. Because of its significance, the issue often divides society into two sides according to each person's social attitude to it, personal convictions, religious beliefs, and national laws.

First of all let me introduce some factual information on the punishment for drug crimes.

Among the countries in the region of East Asia and the Pacific, three countries, Australia, Cambodia, and the Philippines have abolished the death penalty. However, the Philippines has recently reintroduced the penalty. Other countries in the region are retaining the death penalty at least in their law.

There are four major international treaties which require the abolition of death penalty. Among those four, only the Second Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights may apply to our region, because other three are all regional instruments.

Within this region, Australia and Nepal are the state parties to the Second Optional Protocol.

As I suggested earlier, the death penalty often divides the civil society. Therefore, there is a need to facilitate communication on this "sensitive" issue with various part of the civil society through discussion open to the public.

Furthermore, we would like to analyze the death penalty issue in connection to drug control.

Needless to say, drug abuse, production and trafficking impose a threat to the civil society. Drug control measures fight back this problem in order to reduce its devastating effects on human security.

However, nobody thinks that the purpose of drug control may be effectively achieved by a pack of fragmented control measures isolated from each other according to their specialization, such as

supply reduction, demand reduction, and law enforcement. Therefore we choose a more balanced and integrated approach utilizing the methodology called "adaptive change."

"Adaptive change" is called for when a problem cannot be solved with one's existing knowledge and skills, and requires people to shift their values, expectations, attitudes, or habits of behavior. The aggravation of the drug problem is closely related to the globalization of trade, culture and entertainment. Or we may say also that the cause of drug problem has cultural and economic roots. The government alone may not fully control such root causes of the drug problem in these days. Therefore we see more and more the civil society becoming a protagonist of the search for more comprehensive and participatory drug control measures.

When it comes to punishment, the responsible authority is the department of "correction". Death penalty is the only form of punishment that does not have the goal to re-educate the offender. With death penalty, there is no correction, just termination.

Europe, which is the largest group of democracies in the world, has abolished death penalty for all crimes. In Asia and in the Americas, a great number of democracies instead, is very keen to keep it.

Some people would justify the imposition of the capital punishment upon drug offenders, considering the significant effect or threat of drug problems, which devastate human security. Other people might object to the imposition of death penalty on tiny drug traffickers, because we cannot affect kingpins and dismantle huge narco-trafficking by punishing only a small number of traffickers in the bottom end of the trafficking networks.

I am sure then that the debate will be interesting for our goals and the public.