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Your Excellency

OPEN LETTER ON DEATH PENALTY IN TAIWAN

Amnesty International has noted the recent debate on the death penalty sparked by former Minister of Justice Wang Ching-feng's open support for a moratorium on executions and her subsequent resignation. We write to ask you to ensure that Taiwan remains firm in reaching for its stated goal of abolition of the death penalty.

We welcomed the assurances you gave us and other groups at our meeting on 18 June 2008, that Taiwan's de facto moratorium would remain in place. We urge you not to waiver from this stance. The lives of the 44 inmates on death row must not be compromised because of the current political controversy.

We look to Taiwan as a leader in the region on progress toward abolition. We hope that Taiwan's support for a moratorium, along with Mongolia's, where President Elbegdorj formally announced a moratorium in January 2010, will influence the governments of Japan and the People's Republic of China to take similar steps themselves.

As you stated during your meeting with the Prosecutors' Association on 15 March 2010, Taiwan must increase the public debate and education about the death penalty. We see the public attention surrounding the nomination of a new Minister of Justice as an opportunity to highlight the death penalty as the ultimate cruel, inhuman and degrading punishment, one that runs the risk of irrevocable error, fails to provide restorative justice to victims' families, and has not been proven to have any special deterrent effect. The current public debate presents an opportunity to promote the global trend towards abolition, as now more than two-thirds of the countries of the world have abolished the death penalty in law or in practice, and to urge public support to this trend ahead of the United Nations General Assembly vote on a global moratorium scheduled for December 2010.

In a time of heightened political debate, we urge you to demonstrate leadership and continue on the path toward abolition.

Yours sincerely

Claudio Cordone
Secretary General (ad interim)

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