

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL PUBLIC STATEMENT

Date: 23 February 2016
Index: IOR 40/3491/2016

States must reaffirm their commitment to human rights during the next UN Special Session on Drugs and halt violations committed in the name of drug control

Amnesty International urges UN Member States, ahead of the next inter-sessional meeting of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs (CND), to ensure that the respect and protection of human rights are an integral part of the UN General Assembly Special Session (UNGASS) on drugs and its Outcome Document. More than a month after formal negotiations began in Vienna, crucial references to human rights are still absent from the current draft Outcome Document, while certain recommendations fall below international human rights law and standards.

The UN General Assembly Special Session on drugs presents a unique opportunity for States to reaffirm their commitment to the protection of human dignity and ensure that human rights violations committed in the name of the international drug control regime are halted.

Amnesty International particularly regrets that the prohibition of the death penalty for drug-related offences has so far been excluded from the draft Outcome Document. States must ensure that the final Outcome Document includes a call to respect the right to life of persons convicted of drug-related offences in accordance with article 6 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the jurisprudence of the Human Rights Committee.¹

Hundreds of executions are carried out each year for drug-related offences, despite the fact that such offences do not meet the threshold of the “most serious crimes” to which the use of the death penalty must be restricted in accordance with international law and standards. Amnesty International recorded death sentences and executions for drug-related offences in 11 countries in 2014 and in 2015.² Drug-related offences are still punished or punishable by death in more than 30 countries.³

The high-level panel held last year by the Human Rights Council on the “impact of the world

¹ Article 6.2 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. See also UN doc. CCPR/CO/84/THA, 8 July 2005, para. 14; UN doc. A/HRC/10/44, 14 January 2009, para. 66; UN doc. A/HRC/4/20, 29 January 2007, para.53; and UN doc. A/67/275, 9 August 2012, para. 66.

² China, Indonesia, Iran, Kuwait, Malaysia, Saudi Arabia, Singapore, Sri Lanka, Thailand, United Arab Emirates and Viet Nam. See also Amnesty International, *Death sentences and executions in 2014* (ACT 50/001/2015), 31 March 2015, available at <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/act50/0001/2015/en/> [Last accessed on 15 February 2016].

³ This list covers offences that include drug trafficking resulting into death, drug trafficking not resulting into death, and drug trafficking by agents of the state.

drug problem on the enjoyment of human rights" presented an important opportunity to give visibility to the human rights violations that are committed in the name of the international drug control regime. Amnesty International calls on all UN Member States to ensure that the study presented by the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights to the Council⁴ is acknowledged in the Outcome Document and, in particular, that they commit to take immediate steps to implement the recommendations contained therein.

Background Information

In April 2016 the UN General Assembly will hold a Special Session (UNGASS) on drugs in accordance to resolution 67/193. The UNGASS represents an important milestone for UN Members States to assess the impact of the measures put in place to reduce drug production and use as well as the implementation of the Political Declaration and Plan of Action adopted in 1998.

⁴ *Study on the impact of the world drug problem on the enjoyment of human rights*, UN doc. A/HRC/30/65, 4 September 2015.