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## 25<sup>th</sup> session of the Human rights Council

### High level Panel on the question of the death penalty

Geneva, 5th of march 2014

Declaration of Switzerland on behalf of 44 Member States of the Council of Europe

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Mr. President,

I have the honour to deliver this statement on behalf of 42 Member States of the Council of Europe that have signed last year the *Joint Call for the abolition of the death penalty*, launched in Strasbourg on the occasion of the World Day against the Death Penalty.<sup>1</sup> 2 other Member States of the Council of Europe also join this statement.

The supporting countries welcome the organization of this Panel as another useful platform to discuss good practices and share experiences relating to the abolition of the death penalty and to the introduction of a moratorium on executions.

We would like to take the opportunity to reiterate the message of the Joint Call: that the determination needed to achieve abolition of the death penalty must come from states as well as from individuals. Convinced that the death penalty is an intolerable affront to human dignity and that it goes hand in hand with numerous **violations of the human rights of the condemned and their families**, including children, the 44 countries represented here oppose its use under any circumstances anywhere in the world.

The case of Europe illustrates the fundamental role played by **regional and multilateral organizations** in advancing the cause of abolition. The Council of Europe and the European Convention on Human Rights have acted as catalysts for this regional trend, and have even allowed it to spread further afield. The entry into force of Protocol 13 to the said convention (*Protocol concerning the abolition of the death penalty in all circumstances*) 11 years ago is a prime example.

If the history of the abolition of the death penalty in our various countries has taught us anything, it is that the path is long and hard. Capital punishment was not repealed overnight. Its abolition became a reality only as a result of **increasing awareness and constant collective effort**. That the death

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<sup>1</sup> Albania, Andorra, Austria, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, FYR Macedonia, Germany, Georgia, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Republic of Moldova, Monaco, Montenegro, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, San Marino, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey, Ukraine and the United Kingdom

penalty has been all but abolished in Europe today is thanks to informed debate and a fluid exchange of ideas between our countries and societies.

We support the growing trend, towards the abolition of the death penalty in all regions of the world over recent years. Today, only about 50 countries still use the capital punishment, whereas twenty years ago it was almost twice as many. As the resolutions of the United Nations show, a growing majority of States support the establishment of a universal moratorium on death penalty.

That illustrates the universal character of the fight. It also spurs us on in our common efforts to support countries on the path to its universal abolition. We, therefore, strongly urge all states still applying the capital punishment to join a global moratorium on the death penalty as a first step towards its abolition. We also encourage all relevant regional and national actors to take leadership in advancing the cause of the abolition.

I thank you.