

PRESS RELEASE – OHCHR REGIONAL OFFICE FOR SOUTH EAST ASIA

INTERNATIONAL EXPERTS WELCOME EFFORTS TOWARD THE ABOLITION OF DEATH PENALTY IN SOUTH EAST ASIA

Bangkok (23 October 2013) – The UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights in cooperation with the Ministry of Justice of the Kingdom of Thailand organized an expert seminar in Bangkok on moving away from the death penalty in South East Asia (22-23 October). Participants included prominent international experts and representatives from Governments, the ASEAN Inter-governmental Commission on Human Rights, Parliaments, National Human Rights Institutions, the legal profession, academia and civil society.

“This regional meeting comes at a crucial time as the international movement for abolition of the death penalty continues to grow in strength and influence” said Mr. Ibrahim Najjar, former Minister of Justice of Lebanon and currently Commissioner at the International Commission against Death Penalty.

During the two day seminar, building on global trends, participants discussed the situation in South East Asia as well as international standards regulating the use of death penalty. “While challenges remain, experiences in South-East Asia discussed in this seminar tend to confirm the global trend of moving away from the death penalty” said Professor William Schabas, a prominent international expert on the question of capital punishment, adding that he was confident that more countries in South East Asia will take significant steps toward the abolition of the death penalty in the coming years. Professor Vitit Muntarbhorn from the Chulalongkorn University who acted as Chair throughout the expert seminar concluded that this first regional meeting was an important milestone for further discussion at the national and regional level on this critical issue, including through the ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights. “This dialogue among experts from the region is essential to end this unjust and inhumane practice which often affects the most marginalized” said Professor Muntarbhorn, adding that it was hard to reconcile death penalty with fundamental human rights, especially the right to life.

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