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Agenda items 2 and 3

Annual report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and reports of the Office of the High Commissioner and the Secretary-General

Promotion and protection of all human rights, civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights, including the right to development

Note verbale dated 19 September 2014 from the Permanent Mission of the Republic of Singapore to the United Nations Office at Geneva and other international organizations in Switzerland addressed to the secretariat of the Human Rights Council

The Permanent Mission of the Republic of Singapore to the United Nations Office and other International Organisations in Geneva presents its compliments to the Secretariat of the Human Rights Council, and has the honour to refer to the statement attached in the annex,* which was delivered on 15 September 2014 during the general debate on items 2 and 3 of the Human Rights Council at its twenty-seventh session regarding the report of the Secretary-General on the question of the death penalty (A/HRC/27/23).

The Mission has the further honour to request that the statement be circulated as an official document of the twenty-seventh session of the Human Rights Council under agenda items 2 and 3.

* Reproduced as received, in the language of submission only.



Annex

[English only]

Statement by the delegation of Singapore during general debate on items 2 and 3

Mr President

My statement refers to the report of the Secretary General on the question of the death penalty (A/HRC/27/23).

Singapore agrees that the death penalty is a severe penalty and should only be imposed for the most serious crimes. But what constitutes a “most serious crime” must be examined contextually in terms of its impact on the immediate and third party victims, as well as society at large.

Singapore rejects the view expressed in the report that drug-related offences do not meet the threshold of “most serious crimes”. Singapore regards drug trafficking as a “most serious crime” along with those involving lethal force, given its pernicious and widespread impact on the community and society at large. Drug use affects not only the individual users, but also their families and loved ones. Children and young persons have the right to be free from the harms of drug abuse. Drug traffickers typically belong to criminal organisations, including transnational criminal organisations that prey on the young and vulnerable to supply harmful substances to sustain the addiction of drug users for profit. Drugs also generate crime, street violence and other social problems that harm communities. Given our proximity to one of the largest centres of heroin production in the world and position as a major global transport node, Singapore views the death penalty as an essential and effective deterrence against international drug traffickers.

Singapore has one of the lowest rates of violent crime in the world and we have managed to keep Singaporeans free from the scourge of drugs because of our robust and comprehensive policy on drugs. Singaporeans understand that the death penalty has been an effective deterrent and an appropriate punishment for very serious offences, and largely support it.

But we constantly review our laws, including those involving drug offences. The latest review of our death penalty regime in 2012 reaffirmed the relevance of the death penalty for all the offences to which it currently applies. At the same time, the courts have been given more discretion in the application of the death penalty to the specific offences of drug trafficking and murder where these offences occur in certain prescribed circumstances.

There is also no international consensus on the question of the death penalty. Every state has the sovereign right, under international law, to decide whether to abolish or retain the death penalty, taking into account its own circumstances. Singapore respects the right of states which have chosen to abolish the death penalty and we expect similar respect in return for our decision to retain it.
