



Strasbourg, 30.07.2010 – PACE’s rapporteur on the death penalty has called on Thailand to abolish capital punishment, where more than 70 per cent of death row prisoners face execution for drug-related offences. Speaking in Bangkok at a seminar on “Drugs and the death penalty”, Renate Wohlwend (Liechtenstein, EPP/CD) pointed out that drug-related cases were particularly prone to human error and manipulation, leading to miscarriages of justice. There was no evidence the threat of execution had any deterrent effect on drug trafficking, sales or usage, she said.

“The naïve, young and foreign often find themselves facing death for foolishly flouting drug laws – scapegoats for a network which they had no hand in creating,” said Mrs Wohlwend. Unlike murderers, subject to the same drastic penalty, drug offenders did not normally intend their actions to result in anyone’s death.

She pointed out that the first principle of Buddhism, overwhelmingly the main religion in Thailand, was respect for human life. European countries had succeeded in outlawing the death penalty even when “public opinion” appeared to favour it, she said.

Thailand is one of only 25 countries worldwide still carrying out executions, and among only a handful that impose the death penalty for drug offences. Two drug traffickers were executed by lethal injection in August 2009, the first executions in six years.

Referring to two executions this week in Japan, which holds observer status with the Council of Europe, Mrs Wohlwend said she was disappointed that these were overseen by a Justice Minister, Keiko Chiba, who used to chair the Japanese parliament's abolitionist caucus. However, she added: "I hope that the Minister's thoughtful remarks – according to the media – on the need for a thorough debate on the death penalty in Japan are quickly followed by concrete actions."