

Resolution submitted to end death penalty

Kyodo

NEW YORK — A draft resolution calling for a moratorium on capital punishment was submitted Friday to a U.N. committee, with the proposed text seeking exemption for anyone under the age of 18 for the first time.

The draft specifically calls on countries to "progressively restrict the use of the death penalty" and to refrain from handing it down to people under 18 and pregnant women. The proposal is currently being considered by the U.N.'s Third Committee, which deals with human rights issues.

While the idea of establishing a moratorium is hardly new — the General Assembly previously adopted resolutions on the issue in 2007, 2008 and 2010 — creating a minimum age restriction is a novel twist.

Chile, lead sponsor of the resolution, and 75 other cosponsor countries called upon nations and territories "that still maintain the death penalty to establish a moratorium on executions with a view to abolishing it."

The text also calls for reducing the number of offenses for which the death penalty can be applied, and on countries that have established moratoriums to avoid reintroducing capital punishment.

The draft will now be put to a vote in the Third Committee later this month and, if adopted, it would then go before a plenary session of the General Assembly for another vote in December.

The resolution comes as the idea of a moratorium on capital punishment is gradually gaining global traction, with countries increasingly abandoning it. Even California voters almost passed a ban on executions, reflecting changing views on the issue in America.

Japan is among 58 countries and territories that maintain the death penalty, according to Amnesty International, although 140 nations have done away with it either in practice or by law and this number continues to grow.

Japan, which has voted against the past three resolutions on the issue, recently raised alarms among capital punishment opponents by executing a pair of death-row inmates in September, barely two months after it hanged two others.

"I think Japan should certainly come to the side of abolition, as the death penalty is a cruel and irreversible punishment and has proven it is not a

deterrence for crime at all," said a U.N. diplomat whose country supports the draft resolution.

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