

# UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

## CCPR

### RESERVATIONS AND DECLARATIONS

*(Unless otherwise indicated, the reservations and declarations were made upon ratification, accession or succession)*

#### Reservations:

"(1) That article 20 does not authorize or require legislation or other action by the United States that would restrict the right of free speech and association protected by the Constitution and laws of the United States.

(2) That the United States reserves the right, subject to its Constitutional constraints, to impose capital punishment on any person (other than a pregnant woman) duly convicted under existing or future laws permitting the imposition of capital punishment, including such punishment for crimes committed by persons below eighteen years of age.

(3) That the United States considers itself bound by article 7 to the extent that 'cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment' means the cruel and unusual treatment or punishment prohibited by the Fifth, Eighth, and-or Fourteenth Amendments to the Constitution of the United States.

(4) That because U.S. law generally applies to an offender the penalty in force at the time the offence was committed, the United States does not adhere to the third clause of paragraph 1 of article 15.

(5) That the policy and practice of the United States are generally in compliance with and supportive of the Covenant's provisions regarding treatment of juveniles in the criminal justice system. Nevertheless, the United States reserves the right, in exceptional circumstances, to treat juveniles as adults, notwithstanding paragraphs 2 (b) and 3 of article 10 and paragraph 4 of article 14. The United States further reserves to these provisions with respect to States with respect to individuals who volunteer for military service prior to age 18."

#### Understandings:

"(1) That the Constitution and laws of the United States guarantee all persons equal protection of the law and provide extensive protections against discrimination. The United States understands distinctions based upon race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or any other status - as those terms are used in article 2, paragraph 1 and article 26 - to be permitted when such distinctions are, at minimum, rationally related to a legitimate governmental objective. The United States further understands the prohibition in paragraph 1 of article 4 upon discrimination, in time of public emergency, based 'solely' on the status of race, colour, sex, language, religion or social origin, not to bar distinctions that may have a disproportionate effect upon persons of a particular status.

(2) That the United States understands the right to compensation referred to in articles 9 (5) and 14 (6) to require the provision of effective and enforceable mechanisms by which a victim of an unlawful arrest or detention or a miscarriage of justice may seek and, where justified, obtain compensation from either the responsible individual or the appropriate governmental entity. Entitlement to compensation may be subject to the reasonable requirements of domestic law.

(3) That the United States understands the reference to 'exceptional circumstances' in paragraph 2 (a) of article 10 to permit the imprisonment of an accused person with convicted persons where appropriate in light of an individual's overall dangerousness, and to permit accused persons to waive their right to segregation from convicted persons. The United States further understands that paragraph 3 of article 10 does not diminish the goals of punishment, deterrence, and incapacitation as additional legitimate purposes for a penitentiary system.

(4) That the United States understands that subparagraphs 3 (b) and (d) of article 14 do not require the provision of a criminal defendant's counsel of choice when the defendant is provided with court-appointed counsel on grounds of indigence, when the defendant is financially able to retain alternative counsel, or when imprisonment is not imposed. The United States further understands that paragraph 3 (e) does not prohibit a requirement that the defendant make a showing that any witness whose attendance he seeks to compel is necessary for his defense. The United States understands the prohibition upon double jeopardy in paragraph 7 to apply only when the judgment of acquittal has been rendered by a court of the same governmental unit, whether the Federal Government or a constituent unit, as is seeking a new trial for the same cause.

(5) That the United States understands that this Covenant shall be implemented by the Federal Government to the extent that it exercises legislative and judicial jurisdiction over the matters covered therein, and otherwise by the state and local governments; to the extent that state and local governments exercise jurisdiction over such matters, the Federal Government shall take measures appropriate to the Federal system to the end that the competent authorities of the state or local governments may take appropriate measures for the fulfillment of the Covenant."

#### Declarations:

"(1) That the United States declares that the provisions of articles 1 through 27 of the Covenant are not self-executing.

(2) That it is the view of the United States that States Party to the Covenant should wherever possible refrain from imposing any restrictions or limitations on the exercise of the rights recognized and protected by the Covenant, even when such restrictions and limitations are permissible under the terms of the Covenant. For the United States, article 5, paragraph 2, which provides that fundamental human rights existing in any State Party may not be diminished on the pretext that the Covenant recognizes them to a lesser extent, has particular relevance to article 19, paragraph 3 which would permit certain restrictions on the freedom of expression. The United States declares that it will continue to adhere to the requirements and constraints of its Constitution in respect to all such restrictions and limitations.

(3) That the United States declares that the right referred to in article 47 may be exercised only in accordance with international law."

## **OBJECTIONS MADE TO STATE PARTY'S RESERVATIONS AND DECLARATIONS**

**Belgium**, 5 October 1993

“The Government of Belgium wishes to raise an objection to the reservation made by the United States of America regarding article 6, paragraph 5, of the Covenant, which prohibits the imposition of the sentence of death for crimes committed by persons below 18 years of age.

The Government of Belgium considers the reservation to be incompatible with the provisions and intent of article 6 of the Covenant which, as is made clear by article 4, paragraph 2, of the Covenant, establishes minimum measures to protect the right to life.

The expression of this objection does not constitute an obstacle to the entry into force of the Covenant between Belgium and the United States of America.”

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**Denmark**, 1 October 1993

With regard to the reservations made by the United States of America:

"Having examined the contents of the reservations made by the United States of America, Denmark would like to recall article 4, para 2 of the Covenant according to which no derogation from a number of fundamental articles, inter alia 6 and 7, may be made by a State Party even in time of public emergency which threatens the life of the nation.

In the opinion of Denmark, reservation (2) of the United States with respect to capital punishment for crimes committed by persons below eighteen years of age as well as reservation (3) with respect to article 7 constitute general derogations from articles 6 and 7, while according to article 4, para 2 of the Covenant such derogations are not permitted.

Therefore, and taking into account that articles 6 and 7 are protecting two of the most basic rights contained in the Covenant, the Government of Denmark regards the said reservations incompatible with the object and purpose of the Covenant, and consequently Denmark objects to the reservations.

These objections do not constitute an obstacle to the entry into force of the Covenant between Denmark and the United States.”

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**Finland**, 28 September 1993

With regard to the reservations, understandings and declarations made by the United States of America:

"... It is recalled that under international treaty law, the name assigned to a statement whereby the legal effect of certain provisions of a treaty is excluded or modified, does not determine its status as a reservation to the treaty. Understanding (1) pertaining to articles 2, 4 and 26 of the Covenant is therefore considered to constitute in substance a reservation to the Covenant, directed at some of its most essential provisions, namely those concerning the prohibition of discrimination. In the view of the Government of Finland, a reservation of this kind is contrary to the object and purpose of the Covenant, as specified in article 19(c) of the Vienna Convention on the Law of Treaties.

As regards reservation (2) concerning article 6 of the Covenant, it is recalled that according to article 4(2), no restrictions of articles 6 and 7 of the Covenant are allowed for. In the view of the Government of Finland, the right to life is of fundamental importance in the Covenant and the said reservation therefore is incompatible with the object and purpose of the Covenant.

As regards reservation (3), it is in the view of the Government of Finland subject to the general principle of treaty interpretation according to which a party may not invoke the provisions of its internal law as justification for failure to perform a treaty.

For the above reasons the Government of Finland objects to reservations made by the United States to articles 2, 4 and 26 [cf. Understanding (1)], to article 6 [cf. Reservation (2)] and to article 7 [cf. Reservation (3)]. However, the Government of Finland does not consider that this objection constitutes an obstacle to the entry into force of the Covenant between Finland and the United States of America."

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**France**, 4 October 1993

At the time of the ratification of [the said Covenant], the United States of America expressed a reservation relating to article 6, paragraph 5, of the Covenant, which prohibits the imposition of the death penalty for crimes committed by persons below 18 years of age.

France considers that this United States reservation is not valid, inasmuch as it is incompatible with the object and purpose of the Convention.

Such objection does not constitute an obstacle to the entry into force of the Covenant between France and the United States.

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**Germany**, 29 September 1993

"The Government of the Federal Republic of Germany objects to the United States' reservation referring to article 6, paragraph 5 of the Covenant, which prohibits capital punishment for crimes committed by persons below eighteen years of age. The reservation referring to this provision is incompatible with the text as well as the object and purpose of article 6, which, as made clear by paragraph 2 of article 4, lays down the minimum standard for the protection of the right to life.

The Government of the Federal Republic of Germany interprets the United States' 'reservation' with regard to article 7 of the Covenant as a reference to article 2 of the Covenant, thus not in any way affecting the obligations of the United States of America as a state party to the Covenant."

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**Italy**, 5 October 1993

"The Government of Italy, ..., objects to the reservation to art. 6 paragraph 5 which the United States of America included in its instrument of ratification.

In the opinion of Italy reservations to the provisions contained in art. 6 are not permitted, as specified in art.4, para 2, of the Covenant.

Therefore this reservation is null and void since it is incompatible with the object and the purpose of art. 6 of the Covenant.

Furthermore in the interpretation of the Government of Italy, the reservation to art. 7 of the Covenant does not affect obligations assumed by States that are parties to the Covenant on the basis of article 2 of the same Covenant.

These objections do not constitute an obstacle to the entry into force of the Covenant between Italy and the United States."

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**Netherlands**, 28 September 1993

With regard to the reservations to articles 6 and 7 made by the United States of America:

"The Government of the Kingdom of the Netherlands objects to the reservations with respect to capital punishment for crimes committed by persons below eighteen years of age, since it follows from the text and history of the Covenant that the said reservation is incompatible with the text, the object and purpose of article 6 of the Covenant, which according to article 4 lays down the minimum standard for the protection of the right to life.

The Government of the Kingdom of the Netherlands objects to the reservation with respect to article 7 of the Covenant, since it follows from the text and the interpretation of this article that the said reservation is incompatible with the object and purpose of the Covenant.

In the opinion of the Government of the Kingdom of the Netherlands this reservation has the same effect as a general derogation from this article, while according to article 4 of the Covenant, no derogations, not even in times of public emergency, are permitted.

It is the understanding of the Government of the Kingdom of the Netherlands that the understandings and declarations of the United States do not exclude or modify the legal effect of

provisions of the Covenant in their application to the United States, and do not in any way limit the competence of the Human Rights Committee to interpret these provisions in their application to the United States.

Subject to the proviso of article 21, paragraph 3 of the Vienna Convention of the Law of Treaties, these objections do not constitute an obstacle to the entry into force of the Covenant between the Kingdom of the Netherlands and the United States."

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**Norway**, 4 October 1993

With regard to reservations to articles 6 and 7 made by the United States of America:

"1. In the view of the Government of Norway, the reservation (2) concerning capital punishment for crimes committed by persons below eighteen years of age is according to the text and history of the Covenant, incompatible with the object and purpose of article 6 of the Covenant. According to article 4 (2), no derogations from article 6 may be made, not even in times of public emergency. For these reasons the Government of Norway objects to this reservation.

2. In the view of the Government of Norway, the reservation (3) concerning article 7 of the Covenant is according to the text and interpretation of this article incompatible with the object and purpose of the Covenant. According to article 4 (2), article 7 is a non-derogable provision, even in times of public emergency. For these reasons, the Government of Norway objects to this reservation.

The Government of Norway does not consider this objection to constitute an obstacle to the entry into force of the Covenant between Norway and the United States of America."

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**Portugal**, 5 October 1993

With regard to the reservations made by the United States of America:

"The Government of Portugal considers that the reservation made by the United States of America referring to article 6, paragraph 5 of the Covenant which prohibits capital punishment for crimes committed by persons below eighteen years of age is in compatible with article 6 which, as made clear by paragraph 2 of article 4, lays down the minimum standard for the protection of the right to life.

The Government of Portugal also considers that the reservation with regard to article 7 in which a State limits its responsibilities under the Covenant by invoking general principles of National Law may create doubts on the commitments of the Reserving State to the object and purpose of the Covenant and, moreover, contribute to undermining the basis of International Law.

The Government of Portugal therefore objects to the reservations made by the United States of America. These objections shall not constitute an obstacle to the entry into force of the Covenant between Portugal and the United States of America.”

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**Spain**, 5 October 1993

With regard to the reservations made by the United States of America:

“... After careful consideration of the reservations made by the United States of America, Spain wishes to point out that pursuant to article 4, paragraph 2, of the Covenant, a State Party may not derogate from several basic articles, among them articles 6 and 7, including in time of public emergency which threatens the life of the nation.

The Government of Spain takes the view that reservation (2) of the United States having regard to capital punishment for crimes committed by individuals under 18 years of age, in addition to reservation (3) having regard to article 7, constitute general derogations from articles 6 and 7, whereas, according to article 4, paragraph 2, of the Covenant, such derogations are not to be permitted.

Therefore, and bearing in mind that articles 6 and 7 protect two of the most fundamental rights embodied in the Covenant, the Government of Spain considers that these reservations are incompatible with the object and purpose of the Covenant and, consequently, objects to them.

This position does not constitute an obstacle to the entry into force of the Covenant between the Kingdom of Spain and the United States of America.”

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**Sweden**, 18 June 1993

With regard to interpretative declarations made by the United States of America:

"... In this context the Government recalls that under international treaty law, the name assigned to a statement whereby the legal effect of certain provisions of a treaty is excluded or modified, does not determine its status as a reservation to the treaty. Thus, the Government considers that some of the understandings made by the United States in substance constitute reservations to the Covenant.

A reservation by which a State modifies or excludes the application of the most fundamental provisions of the Covenant, or limits its responsibilities under that treaty by invoking general principles of national law, may cast doubts upon the commitment of the reserving State to the object and purpose of the Covenant. The reservations made by the United States of America include both reservations to essential and non-derogable provisions, and general references to national legislation. Reservations of this nature contribute to undermining the basis of international treaty law. All States Parties share a common interest in the respect for the object and purpose of the treaty to which they have chosen to become parties.

Sweden therefore objects to the reservations made by the United States to:

- article 2; cf. Understanding (1);
- article 4; cf. Understanding (1);
- article 6; cf. Reservation (2);
- article 7; cf. Reservation (3);
- article 15; cf. Reservation (4);
- article 24; cf. Understanding (1).

This objection does not constitute an obstacle to the entry into force of the Covenant between Sweden and the United States of America."

## **OBJECTIONS MADE TO OTHER STATES PARTIES RESERVATIONS AND DECLARATIONS**

### Note

See note 1 under "Germany" regarding Berlin (West) in the "Historical Information" section in the front matter of *[the electronic version on the website of the Multilateral Treaties Deposited with the Secretary-General; <http://untreaty.un.org/ENGLISH/bible/englishinternetbible/historicalinfo.asp>. For text in Bayefsky.com, see Germany, CCPR, Reservations and Declarations, note 9].*  
(Note 9, Chapter IV.4, *Multilateral Treaties Deposited with the Secretary-General*)

### **DECLARATION RE: ARTICLE 41**

*(Unless otherwise indicated, the declarations were made upon ratification, accession or succession)*

"The United States declares that it accepts the competence of the Human Rights Committee to receive and consider communications under article 41 in which a State Party claims that another State Party is not fulfilling its obligations under the Covenant."

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