**PERMANENT DELEGATION OF NORWAY
TO THE OSCE**

STATEMENT ON THE DEATH PENALTY IN
THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA AND BELARUS

Delivered by Ambassador Steffen Kongstad at the Permanent Council
Vienna, 15 March 2018

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

I am speaking on behalf of Andorra, Iceland, Liechtenstein, Switzerland and Norway.

Three OSCE participating States maintain the death penalty in law, but have moratoriums on executions. Two participating States, the United States and Belarus, retain the death penalty in both law and in practice.

In the United States, on 18 January, 30 January, and 1 February of this year, the State of Texas executed Anthony Shore, William Rayford and John David Battaglia respectively, all by lethal injection. On 22 February, the State of Florida carried out the death sentence of Eric Branch, also by lethal injection. Both Alabama and Georgia have scheduled executions for today. In Belarus, it was brought to public attention last week that the death sentence of Kiryl Kazachok was carried out by shooting in October of 2017.

Our countries oppose the death penalty in all cases and without exception. We consider the death penalty to be a cruel, inhuman and degrading punishment, incompatible with human rights and human dignity. It is also irreversible. The inherent risk of mistake in all criminal justice systems shows the willingness of retentionist States to risk perpetuating the miscarriage of justice through the application of the death penalty. Innocent people are at times wrongfully convicted and executed. Moreover, it is well documented that capital punishment does not itself deter crime.

There is a global trend to move away from the use of the death penalty, and more than two out of three countries worldwide have now abolished the death penalty by law or in practice.

We strongly urge the United States and Belarus to suspend all executions, take immediate steps towards abolition, and join our efforts to free our region of the death penalty.

Thank you.