



EUROPEAN UNION

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EU statement on European and World Day against the Death Penalty

On the occasion of the European and World Day against the Death Penalty, the European Union wishes to reiterate its firm opposition to the use of the death penalty at all times and in all circumstances, even when backed by due process in a democratic society. As emphasised in the statement issued by High Representative/Vice-President Federica Mogherini and Council of Europe Secretary General Thorbjørn Jagland, the death penalty is incompatible with human dignity. It is an inhumane and degrading treatment, does not have any proven significant deterrent effect, and allows judicial errors to become irreversible and fatal.

The abolition of the death penalty is a distinctive achievement in Europe and the absolute ban of the death penalty under all circumstances is inscribed in the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union. At this year's HDIM the EU once again repeated its recommendation that all States that still practice the death penalty, or who retain it in law, abolish it. We also call on all States not to reintroduce the death penalty once it has been abolished. The threat of terrorism cannot serve as a legal justification for the death penalty.

We deeply regret that in some countries that retain the death penalty, the number of executions has risen. We deplore the continued use of the death penalty in Belarus. Just last week, the Belarusian Supreme Court upheld its fourth confirmation of a death sentence this year, this time against Siarhei Vostrykau. We strongly urge the authorities of Belarus to commute the remaining death sentences and establish without delay a formal moratorium on executions as a first step towards abolition of the death penalty. The introduction of the moratorium would be a decisive step in bringing Belarus closer to the pan-European legal standards.

At the 6th World Congress on the Abolition of the Death Penalty, held in Oslo this year, all participating countries and organisations united behind the call for a global moratorium on death penalty. We hope that the momentum created at the 6th World Congress will lead to further increased number of countries supporting this year's UN Resolution on a Moratorium on the Use of the Death Penalty. The last time this resolution was put forward, a record number of countries – 117 – supported it.

The EU welcomes the continued focus on the issue of the death penalty internationally and within the OSCE. We welcome ODIHR's recently published annual report on the death penalty, in particular its focus on the relationship between the practice of capital punishment and the prohibition of torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment. The recent initiative by the US delegation to organise a forum on capital punishment was a very welcome move, signalling engagement and encouraging debate about the continued use of the death penalty.

The European Union will continue its long-standing campaign against the death penalty, including within the OSCE, and we encourage Belarus and the United States to follow the global trend towards abolition.

The Candidate Countries the FORMER YUGOSLAV REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA*, MONTENEGRO*, SERBIA* and ALBANIA*, the Country of the Stabilisation and Association Process and Potential Candidate BOSNIA and HERZEGOVINA, as well as UKRAINE, the REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA, and ANDORRA align themselves with this statement.

* The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Albania continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.