PRESS RELEASE

European and World Day against the Death Penalty

EU underlines commitment to universal abolition

Today is World and European Day against the Death Penalty. Consistent with its strong and principled policy against the death penalty, the EU is undoubtedly one of the most prominent international players and lead donors in the abolitionist cause worldwide.

Catherine Ashton, High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy/Vice-President of the Commission, and Thorbjørn Jagland, Secretary General of the Council of Europe, have issued today a joint declaration to mark the occasion.

The fight against the death penalty is at the heart of the EU's Human Rights policy and a personal priority for the HR/VP. The EU uses all tools available in order to promote its abolitionist policy, according to the relevant EU guidelines. In the course of 2012 and during the first half of 2013, the EU has issued 54 Statements/Declarations and carried out 30 démarches, thus mapping the capital punishment situation worldwide.

The Foreign Affairs Council of 22 April approved the revised and updated text of the EU Guidelines on Death Penalty, the first ever Human Rights text of its kind adopted in 1998 and subsequently revised twice (2001 and 2008). The new text is a consolidation of the EU's experience in its leading role worldwide towards the abolition of the death penalty. As was the case in the past, the EU Guidelines will continue to provide the basis for the Union's action in the field.
In 2012, the EU led an intensive lobbying campaign for the UN General Assembly resolution on a “Moratorium on the use of the death penalty”. The UN General Assembly on 21 December 2012 adopted the resolution with an unprecedented number of 111 votes in favour whereas the number of co-sponsors rose to a record number of 91.

As well as leading contributions to the efforts of civil society organisations aimed at the abolition of the death penalty, the EU is the first regional body to have adopted rules prohibiting trade in goods used for capital punishment (or torture and ill-treatment), as well as on the supply of technical assistance related to such goods.
