



EUROPEAN UNION

DELEGATION TO THE REPUBLIC OF TAJIKISTAN

European and World Day against the Death Penalty – EU underlines commitment to universal abolition

Today is World and European Day against the Death Penalty. The European Union is opposed to the use of capital punishment in all cases and under any circumstances. Its universal abolition is one of the key objectives of EU human rights policy.

Catherine Ashton, High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy/Vice-President of the Commission, said: "Capital punishment is a cruel, inhumane and irreversible action that violates the basic human right to life and dignity. In the case of any miscarriage of justice, from which no legal system is immune, it represents a terrible and irreversible loss of human life. The death penalty can neither reverse the crime it seeks to punish nor mitigate a victim's loss. It should be a relic of the past."

The European Union regularly reaffirms its opposition to the death penalty and uses the various diplomatic tools at its disposal – including statements, demarches and Human Rights Dialogues with its partners – to advance the cause of worldwide abolition. The movement towards abolition is one of the top priorities in its recently adopted Strategic Framework and Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy, as well as under the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR).

While global momentum continues to build toward abolition, 20 of the 58 retentionist countries around the world continue to carry out executions at an alarming rate. Where the death penalty still exists, the EU calls for its use to be progressively restricted and to respect internationally-agreed minimum standards.

The EU's campaign against the death penalty is equally active in multilateral fora such as the United Nations and is contributing to the adoption of the 67th United Nations General Assembly resolution on a moratorium on use of the death penalty. The EU continues to encourage all States to accede to the Second Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the most fundamental UN international instrument for the abolition of death penalty.

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.

Joint Declaration by Thorbjørn Jagland, Secretary General of the Council of Europe, and Catherine Ashton, European Union High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, on the European and World Day against the Death Penalty, 10 October 2012

“Capital punishment is inhumane and unnecessary. Experience has also shown that it does not serve as a deterrent to crime. No legal system is flawless; any miscarriage of justice could lead to the tragic loss of an innocent life.

Abolition of the death penalty throughout Europe, and beyond, is an objective common to all our member states¹. No execution has taken place in our member states in the last fifteen years.

The European Union and the Council of Europe encourage all European States which have not yet abolished the death penalty *de jure* under all circumstances, to do so by ratifying the relevant protocols to the European Convention on Human Rights.

The Council of Europe and the European Union urge Belarus, the only European country which still executes people, to introduce a moratorium with a view to complete abolition.

We welcome the abolitionist trend worldwide, and note the ever decreasing number of countries applying capital punishment. On the other hand, we are concerned about the sharp increase in executions during the past twelve months in some of those countries which still apply and implement the death penalty.

The European Union and the Council of Europe urge all countries which still retain the death penalty to immediately apply a moratorium on executions as a first step towards abolition. Moreover, we call on all countries to support the Resolution on a global moratorium on the use of the death penalty, which will be put to a vote at the 67th session of the United Nations General Assembly in December 2012.

The Council of Europe and the European Union reaffirm their commitment to continue their persistent efforts to promote abolition in Europe and throughout the world.”

The Acceding Country Croatia*, the Candidate Countries Turkey, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia*, Montenegro*, Iceland⁺ and Serbia*, the Countries of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidates Albania and Bosnia and Herzegovina, and the EFTA countries Liechtenstein and Norway, members of the European Economic Area, as well as Ukraine and the Republic of Moldova align themselves with this declaration.

¹ The Council of Europe counts 47 member states, which include all 27 member states of the European Union.

* Croatia, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.

⁺ Iceland continues to be a member of the EFTA and of the European Economic Area.