

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 2013

Today, on the occasion of the European and World Day against the Death Penalty, the Council of Europe and the European Union reiterate their strong opposition to the use of capital punishment. They continue to underline, whenever and wherever possible, the inhumane and cruel nature of this unnecessary punishment and its failure to prevent crime. Although we are encouraged by the growing momentum towards abolition of the death penalty worldwide, the resumption of executions and breaches of decades of moratoria in different parts of the world clearly mark the necessity to pursue our long-standing action against the death penalty, in Europe and worldwide. Voices in favour of the death penalty within some parts of society, including in our continent, show that there is a continuous need to spell out why the death penalty runs contrary to the right to life and to human dignity.

Based on the fact that no execution has taken place on their territory for the past fifteen years, the European Union and the Council of Europe share the common overarching objective to consolidate the abolition within and beyond its borders. Protocols Nos 6 and 13 to the European Convention on Human Rights as well as Article 2 (2) of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union as today binding on the European Union, call for the death penalty to be abolished. In this context, we urge all European States which have not yet abolished the death penalty *de jure* in 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 regret the continuous use of death penalty in Belarus, the only country in Europe still applying it. We urge the authorities of Belarus to examine and explore all possibilities available in order to introduce a moratorium on executions as a first step towards abolition.

We welcome the extraordinary efforts of the cross-regional alliance that successfully led and guided the adoption, with an unprecedented number of votes, in December 2012, of the UN General Assembly Resolution on a Moratorium on the use of death penalty.

We would like to stress the symbolic and substantial importance of the 5th World Congress held in Madrid on 12-15 June 2013 and warmly congratulate the organisers, the four European countries which acted as main sponsors and the other European countries which contributed to the event. The extensive and diverse participation to this Congress clearly shows the worldwide tendency against the death penalty. The Council of Europe and the European Union will continue to work closely with all interlocutors, governmental and civil society, with a view to developing synergies towards universal abolition.

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.

* 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.