Joint local statement on executions in Japan

The European Union Delegation, the Heads of Mission of EU Member States and the Heads of Mission of Iceland, Norway and Switzerland issue the following statement in Japan:

On 6 July, seven executions were carried out by the Japanese authorities. Those executed were members of the Aum sect, who have been found responsible for the heinous sarin terrorist attack perpetrated on the Tokyo subway system in 1995.

The European Union (EU), its Member States, Iceland, Norway and Switzerland recognise that this is a particularly painful and unique case for Japan and its citizens. We convey our heartfelt sympathy, share the suffering of the victims and their families and absolutely condemn terrorist attacks, whoever the perpetrators and for whatever reason.

However, notwithstanding the gravity of this case, the European Union its Member States, Iceland, Norway and Switzerland are strongly and unequivocally opposed to the use of capital punishment under all circumstances and we aim at its universal abolition. The death penalty is cruel and inhuman, and fails to act as a deterrent to crime. Furthermore, any errors - inevitable in any legal system - are irreversible. Recalling the period of 20 months before March 2012 when no executions took place in Japan, we call on the Japanese government to adopt a moratorium on executions with a view to abolishing this punishment.

We will continue our active pursuit of abolition of the death penalty worldwide, including in Japan, a friend and like-minded country, with which we share values and principles. We will do so in a constructive spirit and in accordance with the recommendations made in the framework of the United Nations Human Rights Council Universal Periodic Review (UPR).

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