



EUROPEAN UNION

OSCE Permanent Council No. 1340

Vienna, 21 October 2021

EU Statement on European and World Day against the Death Penalty

1. On the European and World day against the Death Penalty, 10 October, dedicated to the impact of the death penalty on women, the European Union wishes to reiterate its strong and unequivocal opposition to the use of death penalty at all times and in all circumstances.
2. As emphasized in the statement jointly issued by the EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security and the Council of Europe Secretary General: “the death penalty is a cruel, inhuman and degrading punishment contrary to the right to life. Its abolition is essential to ensure respect for human dignity”.
3. The abolition of death penalty is primarily a question of political will. We welcome the fact that the number of countries that maintains the death penalty in law and in practice has continued to fall. Last year, no executions took place in 176 countries, representing 91% of the UN member states. Every year there are new steps towards global abolition of death penalty.
4. This year saw one more abolition in the USA: in March, the State of Virginia became the 23rd US State to dispense with capital punishment. President Biden’s intention to abolish death penalty at the federal level in the United States, as well as the moratorium on executions imposed by the US Attorney General, are encouraging steps. Armenia has ratified the Second Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights on the abolition of death penalty, and Kazakhstan is in the process of finalising its ratification. We urge Belarus to move towards abolition.
5. We recall our commitment undertaken in the 1991 Moscow Document to “make

available to the public information regarding the use of the death penalty". As such, the EU remains deeply concerned about the lack of transparency and secrecy surrounding the use of death penalty in Belarus, which leaves the relatives of the convicted and the public in the dark.

6. Although women represent a small percentage of global death sentences, gender-based discrimination continues to have a disproportionate impact on women at all levels of the criminal justice system, thus exacerbating existing structural socio-economic inequalities and stigmatisation.
7. Ending the trade in goods used in capital punishment is particularly important for eliminating the death penalty. The Global Alliance for Torture-Free Trade today involves 62 states. We call on all states to join it and to step up efforts towards establishing common international standards on torture-free trade.
8. In the run up to the 2022 World Congress against the Death Penalty, the European Union will continue to support increased public debate and awareness-raising activities concerning death penalty and its impact on families and societies. We will not stop our work and our vigilance, our dialogue with those who have not yet accomplished abolition and our support to civil society and NGOs until no further death sentence is applied.
9. The EU reaffirms its strong opposition to the use of the death penalty at all times and in all circumstances. The death penalty violates the inalienable right to life enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and is the ultimate cruel, inhuman and degrading punishment. Miscarriages of justice, inevitable in any judicial system, are irreversible. Capital punishment also fails to act as a deterrent to crime.
10. The EU will continue its long-standing campaign against the death penalty, including within the OSCE. We call on the two participating States that still maintain the death penalty in law and in practice, as well as on relevant OSCE Partners for Cooperation, to introduce a moratorium on executions as a first step towards abolition.

The Candidate Countries the REPUBLIC of NORTH 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, GEORGIA, ANDORRA, and SAN MARINO align themselves with this statement.

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