

Brussels, 10 October 2008

European Union signs declaration against death penalty

On the occasion of the World and European day against the death penalty, a Joint Declaration has been signed by the Presidents of the European Parliament, of the Council and of the European Commission, on the EU side, and by the President of the Parliamentary Assembly, the Chairman of the Committee of Ministers and the Secretary General of the Council of Europe. The declaration confirms their commitment to continue to work towards the universal abolition of this punishment.

Vice President Jacques Barrot, Commissioner responsible for freedom, justice and security stated "Europe has created a *de facto* death penalty-free zone stretching from Iceland in the west to Vladivostok in the east and from Norway in the north to the south-east of Turkey – this is one of Europe's greatest achievements.

"Nevertheless", the Vice-President continued, "public debates within our societies demonstrate the need to reiterate, time and time again, that the abolition of the death penalty is an essential achievement for the respect for human dignity. This is the reason the European Commission works side by side with NGOs that are active in this field and supports abolitionist actions".

Both the Council of Europe and the European Union are unreservedly opposed to the use of capital punishment under all circumstances and have consistently called for the universal abolition of this punishment.

The Death penalty constitutes a violation of the most fundamental of human rights: the right to life. This explains why the prohibition of the death penalty is one of the key provisions of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union. It explicitly states that "*no one shall be condemned to the death penalty or executed*" in the Union.

For more information on the activities of Vice-President Barrot, please see:

http://ec.europa.eu/commission_barroso/barrot/index_en.htm