



## EUROPEAN COMMISSION - PRESS RELEASE

### EU committed to achieving universal abolition of the death penalty

Brussels, 10 October 2011 - 10 October marks the World and European Day against the Death Penalty. The abolition of the death penalty worldwide is one of the main objectives of the EU's human rights policy. The EU considers the death penalty inhumane and a violation of human dignity. It also does not deter violent crime. Any capital punishment resulting from a miscarriage of justice, from which no legal system can be immune, represents an irreversible loss of human life.

"Today we mark the World and European Day against the Death Penalty. I pledge my continued personal commitment, as well as that of the European Union, to doing away with the death penalty, which has no place in the modern world," said EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and Vice President of the European Commission, Catherine Ashton.

The EU plays the leading role in and is the biggest donor to efforts by civil society organizations around the world to campaign for the abolition of the death penalty. The EU uses all available tools of diplomacy and cooperation assistance to work towards the abolition of the death penalty. Where the death penalty still exists, the EU calls for its use to be progressively restricted and insists that it be carried out according to internationally-agreed minimum standards.

The EU encourages public debate, strengthening public opposition and putting pressure on retentionist countries to abolish the death penalty, or at least introduce a moratorium as a first step. The EU also acts against the death penalty in multilateral forums, such as the United Nations; a culmination of this effort has been the series of resolutions on the moratorium on the use of the death penalty, adopted by the United Nations General Assembly.

July 2011 marked the 20th anniversary of the entry into force of the Second Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the main worldwide legal instrument for the abolition of the death penalty. The EU encourages all States to ratify or accede to this protocol.

The EU is also the first regional body to have adopted rules prohibiting the trade in goods used for capital punishment (and torture and ill-treatment), as well as the supply of technical assistance related to such goods. The EU's political commitment has been matched by substantial financial support for concrete projects.

For more information, see MEMO/11/669

Joint statement at:

[http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms\\_Data/docs/pressdata/EN/foraff/124992.pdf](http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_Data/docs/pressdata/EN/foraff/124992.pdf)

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[http://www.eeas.europa.eu/human\\_rights/adp/index\\_en.htm](http://www.eeas.europa.eu/human_rights/adp/index_en.htm)

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