



EUROPEAN UNION

OSCE Permanent Council No 1101 Vienna, 26 May 2016

EU Statement on the Death Penalty in Belarus

On 19 May the Homyel Regional Court passed a death sentence against Siarhei Vostrykau. This is the third new death sentence passed by a Belarusian court in 2016. It follows the execution of Syarhey Iwanow in April as well as confirmation by the Belarusian Supreme Court of three further death sentences.

The upsurge of new and confirmed death sentences in Belarus over the last months runs counter to Belarus' stated willingness to engage with the international community, including the European Union, on the matter and to consider the introduction of a moratorium on the use of the death penalty. The latter is also a commitment made by Belarus in response to recommendations made by the UN Human Rights Council in the Universal Periodic Review.

Mr. Vostrykau is convicted of serious crimes and we reiterate our deepest sympathy to the family and friends of the victims of these crimes.

The European Union opposes capital punishment everywhere and in all cases. Experience worldwide has demonstrated that capital punishment fails to act as a deterrent to crime, which is why many countries have stopped applying it. Furthermore, the execution of a person, regardless of the conviction, is a cruel and unacceptable denial of human dignity and integrity and is irreversible.

We expect Belarus, the only country in Europe still applying capital punishment, to join a global moratorium on the death penalty as a first step towards its abolition.

The European Union again recalls the Council Conclusion of February 15, 2016, where it condemned the application of the death penalty in Belarus and urged the Belarusian authorities to set up a moratorium as a first step towards its abolition. The Council also reiterated its concern with the situation of human rights in Belarus and recalled that

EU-Belarus relations should be based on common values, especially respect for human rights, democracy and the rule of law. The Council also acknowledged the steps taken by Belarus over the last two years which have contributed to improving EU-Belarus relations.

The Candidate Countries the FORMER YUGOSLAV REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA*, MONTENEGRO*, SERBIA* and ALBANIA*, the Country of the Stabilisation and Association Process and Potential Candidate BOSNIA and HERZEGOVINA, and the EFTA countries ICELAND and NORWAY, members of the European Economic Area, as well as UKRAINE, the REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA and SAN MARINO align themselves with this statement.

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