



EUROPEAN UNION

**OSCE Permanent Council Nr 982
Vienna, 30 January 2014**

EU Statement on the Death Penalty in Belarus

The European Union deeply regrets that a regional court in Minsk on 26 November last year sentenced Mr Eduard Lykau, a 53-year old Belarusian citizen, to death. Information about Mr Lykau's sentencing was only made public almost a month later, on 20 December, and it brings the number of persons sentenced to death by Belarusian courts in 2013 to four.

The European Union also deeply regrets that the Homyel Regional Court on 24 December 2013 has issued a new death penalty sentence for Mr Aleysander Grunow, after it had been annulled earlier in the year by the Belarusian Supreme Court. In a statement on 27 December, EU High Representative, Catherine Ashton, expressed her hope that Mr Grunow's right to appeal will be fully exercised.

The sentencing of Mr Lykau and Mr Grunow is in contradiction of the stated efforts by Belarusian authorities to gradually restrict the use of the death penalty. We urge Belarus, as the only country in Europe still applying capital punishment, to join the global trend towards the abolition of the death penalty.

While we are aware of the suffering of the victims of violent crime, we recall that, with capital punishment, any miscarriage of justice, from which no justice system is immune, represents an irreversible loss of human life. Furthermore, no reliable evidence supports the argument that the death penalty is a deterrent to serious crime.

The European Union opposes the use of capital punishment in all cases and under all circumstances. We call for a global moratorium as a first step towards the universal abolition of capital punishment, in line with resolutions adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 2007, 2008, 2010 and 2012.

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

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