



EUROPEAN UNION

**OSCE Permanent Council N°1121
Vienna, 1 December 2016**

**EU Statement on the executions in Belarus of Ivan Kulesh
and Sergei Khmelevsky**

The European Union strongly condemns two executions, of Ivan Kulesh and Sergei Khmelevsky, that took place in Belarus in November. The executions follow that of Syarhey Iwanov in April.

The continued application of the death penalty goes counter to Belarus' stated willingness to engage with the international community, including the EU, 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 the recommendations made by the UN Human Rights Council in the Universal Periodic Review. In addition, Mr. Khmelevsky's case was still in the appeal procedure under the UN Human Rights Committee, which had communicated to the Belarusian authorities in August 2016 that it was considering the complaint.

The European Union opposes capital punishment, which fails to act as a deterrent to crime and represents an unacceptable denial of human dignity and integrity. This view was also conveyed during the recent high-level EU visits to Minsk. The death penalty cannot be justified under any circumstances.

We urge Belarus, the only country in Europe still applying capital punishment, to commute the remaining death sentences and to establish without delay a moratorium on executions as a first step towards abolition of the death penalty.

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 as well as UKRAINE, the REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA and ANDORRA 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.