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EUROPEAN UNION

**OSCE Permanent Council No 1100
Vienna, 12 May 2016**

EU Statement on the Death Penalty in Belarus

Despite the many calls made by the European Union, an execution has been carried out in Belarus, adding to the new wave of executions being handed down in the country. The case of Syarhey Iwanow, who had been sentenced to death by the Supreme Court of Belarus in March 2015, is particularly disturbing in light of the fact that his complaint was pending with the UN Human Rights Committee at the time of his execution. We condemn the execution of Syarhey Iwanow.

The death sentence against Sergei Khmelevsky, which was upheld by the Belarus Supreme Court on 6 May, has also been confirmed. Mr Khmelevsky was 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 in all cases. It fails to act as a deterrent to crime and represents an unacceptable denial of human dignity and integrity. Over the last decades, numerous countries have recognised that the death penalty cannot be justified under any circumstances and have stopped applying it.

The European Union recalls the Council Conclusion of February 15, 2016, where it condemned the application of the death penalty in Belarus, notably deplored the two recent death sentences pronounced, 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, as well as UKRAINE and the REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA 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.