



German Presidency of the Council of the European Union

650th Meeting of the Permanent Council

08 February 2007

Statement of the European Union on the Death Penalty

On the occasion of the Third World Congress against the Death Penalty held in Paris from 1 - 3 February 2007 the Presidency read out a declaration on behalf of the European Union which, with your indulgence, I would like to quote here in full:

“On the occasion of the Third World Congress against Death Penalty the EU reiterates its longstanding active opposition to the death penalty. The EU is at the forefront of abolitionist efforts around the world and will continue to oppose the death penalty in all cases and under all circumstances because it considers the death penalty to be a cruel and inhuman punishment.

Furthermore, the death penalty provides no added value in terms of deterrence. Any miscarriage or failure of justice is irreversible, when, in a cruel and inhumane way, the punishment deprives one of his or her right to life. The EU is therefore convinced that the abolition of the death penalty contributes to the enhancement of human dignity and the progressive development of human rights.

Considerable progress has been made in global endeavours to abolish the death penalty over recent years, and the European Union is pleased to note that this positive trend towards universal abolition is continuing. Most recently, the European Union welcomed the abolition of the death penalty in the Philippines and Moldova in 2006 and positive developments towards its complete abolition in many other countries.

Despite this progress, the fight against the death penalty is far from being won. Indeed, death sentences and executions remain all too frequent in many countries,

even where there is a declining trend. The European Union is particularly concerned about the ongoing discussion in some abolitionist countries on restoring the death penalty in their legislation. The EU also expresses its absolute abhorrence at the fact that in a few countries - in clear violation of their international legal obligations - minors are still being sentenced to death and executed. The European Union also remains particularly concerned about the standards of justice which are used in the application of capital punishment.

The fight against terrorism can never be a reason or justification for introducing or restoring the death penalty. Terrorism can be combated most effectively by adhering strictly to international law and respecting human rights.

The European Union will continue its policy based on the *Guidelines on the Death Penalty* adopted in 1998 by the Council of the EU. The Guidelines have enabled the EU to develop a multi-faceted approach, in close cooperation with civil society. Therefore, and consistently with its Guidelines, the EU will intensify its initiatives in international fora, including the United Nations. In doing so, the EU will continue to reflect on how its actions can be further enhanced. In this regard, the EU recalls the Statement of 19 December 2006 on the Death Penalty delivered in the General Assembly of the United Nations at the initiative of the EU and signed by 85 countries from all geographical groups.

Opposition to the death penalty is not defined by regional or cultural borders, but is embedded within a global commitment to human rights and dignity. The European Union therefore calls on the governments of all countries which still retain the death penalty to work towards the abolition of the death penalty under all circumstances. As a first step towards this goal, the EU calls on the governments concerned to introduce a moratorium on the death penalty with immediate effect.”

The Candidate Countries Turkey, Croatia and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia*, the Countries of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidates Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, and Serbia, EFTA countries Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway, members of the European Economic Area, as well as Ukraine and the Republic of Moldova align themselves with this statement.

* Croatia and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.