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PC.DEL/992/19
5 September 2019

ENGLISH
Original: RUSSIAN

Delegation of the Russian Federation

**STATEMENT BY MR. ALEXANDER LUKASHEVICH,
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION,
AT THE 1239th MEETING OF THE OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

5 September 2019

On the use of the death penalty in the United States of America

Mr. Chairperson,

Russia does not apply the death penalty, but neither is it an advocate of imposing the legislative repeal of the death penalty on other countries. That being said, as already pointed out here on a number of occasions, this form of punishment is very often carried out in the United States of America using methods that are tantamount to torture.

It is for this reason that we are concerned by the United States Government's intention to start applying the death penalty at the federal level again. According to a press release issued by the US Department of Justice on 25 July, Attorney General William P. Barr has instructed the Federal Bureau of Prisons to adopt an addendum to the Federal Execution Protocol. This instrument enables the US Government to resume capital punishment after a lapse of almost 16 years. We should mention that the death penalty has continued to be applied at the state level throughout all these years.

The executions of five inmates have already been scheduled to take place at the Penitentiary Terre Haute, in the state of Indiana, later this year in December and in January 2020. In each case, the execution will be carried out by means of an injection of a lethal dose of pentobarbital.

In the Department of Justice's press release it is also mentioned that "[a]dditional executions will be scheduled at a later date". According to open-data sources, a total of 62 inmates are currently on federal death row in the United States.

This initiative by the US authorities has already been subjected to severe criticism by civil society organizations. Thus, the American Civil Liberties Union has asserted that the use of the death penalty at the federal level is defined by "racial bias" and "prosecutorial misconduct".

Moreover, according to the Death Penalty Information Center, which is the US non-governmental organization (NGO) that specializes in this field, since 1973 there have been 166 cases in which the death sentence was reversed because those placed on death row were subsequently exonerated of all charges. We are, therefore, talking about miscarriages of justice, the price of which is the putting to death of innocent people.

To promote their ideas, the supporters of the death penalty have exploited the tragic events of El Paso (Texas) and Dayton (Ohio), in which scores of people were killed or injured. This is despite the fact that, according to data from the NGO National Coalition to Abolish the Death Penalty, 90 million US citizens are against the use of this form of punishment.

As is known, the US Department of Justice has been directed “to propose legislation ensuring that those who commit hate crimes and mass murders face the death penalty – and that this capital punishment be delivered quickly, decisively, and without years of needless delay”.

It is remarkable that such discussions are going on within a State that sets itself up as a model of democracy and seeks, in a schoolmasterly fashion, to impose its interpretation of human rights on others.

In this respect, a great many questions are thrown up by the position of the European Union (EU), which is responsible for having today raised the subject of the use of the death penalty in the United States.

According to the EU Strategic Framework and Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy, “when faced with violations of human rights, the EU will make use of the full range of instruments at its disposal, including sanctions or condemnation”. However, notwithstanding the fact that a fundamental human right – the right to life – has for a long time been grossly violated in the United States, the EU prefers to limit itself to mere public condemnation. And this when, as everyone knows, the EU applies a sanctions regime to a number of other States on account, *inter alia*, of their use of the death penalty. The usual double standards.

Thank you for your attention.