

Speech by Jean-Louis Ville

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for a world without the death penalty
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Eminenza,
Eccellenze,
Distinte Autorità,
Illustri Ospiti,

Sono estremamente lieto di essere vostro ospite e di poter unire la mia voce alla vostra e a quella di coloro che strenuamente lottano per l'abolizione della pena di morte su scala mondiale.

Mister President,
Excellences,
Distinguished guests,

First of all, I would like to express my extreme gratitude for inviting me to this major annual event, one of the most important initiatives taken to advance the abolitionist cause worldwide.

As you know, the European Union is **at the forefront of international efforts to abolish death penalty worldwide**. All European Member States are strongly opposed to the death penalty in all circumstances. The abolition of the death penalty is a requirement for countries seeking EU membership. The fight against death penalty is enshrined in the **Protocol n°6 and n°13 of the European Convention on Human Rights**, which prohibit recourse to the death penalty under any circumstances, both in peacetime and in wartime. It is also a strong feature of the **EU Charter on Fundamental Rights**, which was proclaimed at the European Council Summit of December 2000 in Nice.

That is why the fight against torture and other cruel and inhuman treatment and punishment and the fight against the death penalty **are at the heart of the EU's Human Rights policy**.

Since their first adoption in 1998, the **EU Guidelines on Death Penalty have provided a solid and efficient basis for the EU's abolitionist objectives**. Subsequent updates and revisions of 2001, 2008 and notably 2013 have succeeded in **consolidating the EU language** on the abolition of the capital

punishment and defining individual objectives, i.e. 1) full abolition, where possible, 2) establishment of moratorium on executions and 3) respect for international minimum standards.

We therefore work tirelessly, using **all our available tools of diplomacy and cooperation assistance**, towards achieving the goal of worldwide abolition.

The fight against death penalty is also a personal priority for HR/VP Mogherini as shows the number of public statements released in 2015, deploring the continuing use of the death penalty in various parts of the world, notably **Iran, Iraq, Saudi Arabia, Pakistan, Belarus, Egypt, Japan, Indonesia, Singapore, China, Vietnam, Taiwan and the USA** which were a particular focus of attention. But statements were also issued and demarches were carried out in **many other countries**, based on the minimum standards defined by international law and the EU Guidelines on the Death Penalty. The EU has given considerable emphasis to the violation of those minimum standards, stressing the inadmissibility of the use of death penalty for minors, the mentally disabled and for crimes which do not constitute "most serious" ones, such as drug offences.

Throughout 2015, the EU **continued to reaffirm its opposition to the death penalty**. The **new Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy (2015-2019) maintains the death penalty**, together with torture, at the very heart of its priorities, calling for their comprehensive inclusion into all EU support actions towards partner countries and civil society organisations.

To mark the **European Day against the Death Penalty and the World Day against the Death Penalty on 10 October**, the EU and the Council of Europe issued a **joint statement** reaffirming their opposition to the use of capital punishment in all circumstances, and their commitment to the abolition of the death penalty worldwide. In parallel, numerous EU Delegations commemorated this important date by organising various events such as debates, conferences and other public awareness activities.

The **EU continued to raise its opposition to the death penalty in all relevant multilateral fora, in particular at the UN, the OSCE and the Council of Europe**, building on the success of the adoption of the UNGA 69 Resolution on the Moratorium of executions with an unprecedented number of votes in favour.

Last but not least, through its development cooperation, the EU is **the lead donor** in this field and provides substantial financial assistance both to the judiciary on national level and to NGO projects under the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR).

Since 2007, the EIDHR has allocated **almost 20 million Euros to projects fighting against the death penalty around the world**. Projects supported by

the EC were selected through two global calls for proposals (launched in 2008 and in 2011).

Under the new EIDHR Regulation 2014-2020, support to Death Penalty abolition and to the fight against torture and ill-treatment remains a priority and **the 2015 global call for proposal launched last August included a 6.8 million euros lot dedicated to the fight against the death penalty.** In addition, local calls for proposals are organised locally by EU Delegations.

I am fully convinced of the effectiveness of your work and of the importance of our support to your work in the fight against torture and the death penalty. We had recently a successful example of the leverage and impact of our support. **Indeed, the Governor of Pennsylvania acknowledged the decisive role of the American Bar Association report (funded by the EIDHR) in the adoption of a moratorium on the death penalty that he declared in his State in 2015.**

I am indeed particularly pleased to note that the **worldwide trend towards abolition is positive** - as of December 2015, 141 countries, more than two-thirds of countries in the world, were abolitionist in law or in practice. I welcome namely the recent abolition of the death penalty in Madagascar, Fiji, Suriname and the US State of Nebraska.

Nevertheless, I am also aware that a lot of work remains to be done and that in other parts of the world we are witnessing very worrying trends, such as in the MENA region.

You can count on the EU willingness to accompany you on the long journey of the abolition. I thank you for your attention.

Vorrei porgere i miei più sentiti ringraziamenti agli organizzatori per avermi ed averci dato l'opportunità di essere qui oggi a discutere costruttivamente di una delle questioni fondamentali per l'intera umanità.

Vi ringrazio sinceramente per il vostro ascolto e per la vostra attenzione.