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Current issue: World Day against the Death Penalty – Joint Statement

Mr. Chair,

I am delivering this statement on behalf of Canada, Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway, United Kingdom and my own country Switzerland.

The 10th of October marked the 20th World Day against the Death Penalty. We welcome the fact that the global trend towards the abolition of capital punishment continues unabated in many parts of the world, including the OSCE region. At the launch of the World Day, twenty years ago, only 76 states had abolished the death penalty. Today, 110 states have done so. In this light, we commend Kazakhstan for the ratification of the Second Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, aiming at the abolition of the death penalty. As of today, only two participating States continue to apply capital punishment: Belarus and the United States.

In the case of Belarus, we are deeply concerned by the extension of the application of the death penalty for what is deemed “attempted acts of terrorism”. This step is contrary to Belarus’ obligations under international law. We therefore call on the authorities of Belarus to reverse this decision.

Mr. Chair,

The use of the death penalty represents a violation of human rights, human dignity and personal integrity everywhere in the world and under all circumstances. It does not serve as a greater deterrence to potential offenders than other severe punishments, and hence has no impact on the prevention of crime, violence and violent extremism.

As we were reminded at the Warsaw Human Dimension Conference, it is crucial to continue involving civil society actors in the campaign towards the universal abolition of capital punishment. Their contribution has been instrumental in the progress achieved thus far.

Our countries remain committed to the universal abolition of the death penalty and call on all States, within the OSCE and beyond, to completely abolish capital punishment or, as a first step, establish a moratorium on its use. In this regard, we encourage all participating States to vote in favour of the UN resolution calling for a moratorium on capital punishment which is being negotiated at the UN General Assembly.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.