



PERMANENT DELEGATION OF NORWAY TO THE OSCE

STATEMENT BY NORWAY

As delivered by Counsellor Lars Løberg to the 2012 Human Dimension implementation meeting, Warsaw 26 September 2012 – Working Session 5

Thank you, Mr. Chairman,

Let me first express our support to the EU statement, which covers also the Norwegian positions. That gives me the luxury to focus on only one issue of the many topics on the agenda for this working session, the question of abolition of capital punishment.

Mr. Chairman,

The annotated agenda for today's meeting lists the short version of the OSCE history on combating the death penalty. That short story also tells us the saddening truth: Not much has happened since the Vienna pledge of 1989 and the Copenhagen Meeting of 1990.

The 1989 pledge probably was an ambitious one in 1989, when only 52 countries had abolished the death penalty. Today, as that number has almost tripled, it is about time for this organization to adjust her policy, her commitments and her recommendations to the changing world around us.

Fact is, there is no absolute demand for death penalty in any religion, culture or in criminal science. The vast majority of countries have relinquished the death penalty.

There are countries that have chosen to abolish death penalty across all geographical regions, both rich and poor countries, of all cultures, all values and all traditions.

There is great variation in the practice of the death penalty among countries with the same dominant religions. This applies to Muslim, Christian, Hindu, Buddhist – and secular.

All of this shows that each country is free to choose!

They are free to choose regardless of their economic status, cultural or religious belonging.

Therefore our message must be clear: The door is open for greater freedom for all countries to choose not to take lives.

Mr. Chairman,

Norway firmly believes that this freedom should be used to abolish the death penalty.

We have pledged to work systematically and impartially to fight the death penalty in our relations with all states.

Norway consistently protests against executions in all countries, both alone and together with the EU, Switzerland, Canada and many other countries on all continents.

Norway is honoured to be taking over the presidency of the Support group of the International Commission against the Death Penalty (ICDP) next month and to continuing our joint efforts to strengthen the work of the Commission through its cross-regional support group. The ICDP is composed of personalities from all regions of the world of high international standing who act with total independence and neutrality to achieve a universal moratorium on executions as a step towards global abolition. The added value of the ICDP lies in the importance of its members, their independence in decision making and broad geographical representation.

Furthermore, we are actively engaged in the organising of the 5th World Congress against the Death Penalty to be held in Madrid in June next year. All states are invited to participate, as well as civil society and intergovernmental organizations. We encourage you all to participate and hope to see many new commitments to the global fight against the death penalty at this major triennial event.

Mr. Chairman,

Today, we are at a crucial point in the long battle against death penalty worldwide -a real turning point.

An estimated 150 UN Member States have abolished the death penalty or introduced a moratorium, either in law or practice. It is indeed encouraging that the global momentum is shifting towards abolition. The adoption in 2007 of the first United Nations General Assembly resolution on a moratorium on the use of the death penalty demonstrates this positive trend. The resolution was adopted with an overwhelming majority and reaffirmed for the second time in December 2010. We look forward to working with others to secure record support for this year's moratorium resolution in the UN General Assembly.

If we are to make sure that we continue in the right direction, we need to continue to commit ourselves to the task. That is also why we need an OSCE commitment to stop this barbaric practice.

Norway remains committed – and we urge those two participating states that still practice this malpractice, Belarus and the USA – to do what must be done to stop executing people. This is the 21st Century. The death penalty belongs to the past, not to the modern world. That is why it is time for you two to pledge your willingness to join a consensus in the OSCE. The death penalty is to be abolished.

Mr. Chairman, thank you for your attention.