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**STATEMENT BY
THE PERMANENT DELEGATION OF THE REPUBLIC OF BELARUS
TO THE OSCE AT THE 957th MEETING OF THE
OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

27 June 2013

**In response to the statements by the European Union and Switzerland on
the death penalty**

Mr. Chairperson,

We have listened carefully to the statements by the delegations of the European Union and Switzerland (also on behalf of Liechtenstein and Norway) and will bring the points made in them to the attention of our Government.

We respect the principled position taken by these countries on the issue of the death penalty.

The national Constitution provides for the temporary application of the death penalty in the Republic of Belarus until it is abolished. At the same time, this measure is exceptional and applied extremely rarely, only in the case of particularly serious or brutal crimes.

In the 1996 referendum the overwhelming majority of the Belarusian population voted in favour of retaining the death penalty.

Nevertheless, Belarus is currently carefully studying all the pros and cons of this form of punishment. The parliamentary group on the death penalty has resumed operations. The question is being widely and openly discussed in Belarusian society and the media.

For example, a round table on the death penalty organized together with the Council of Europe was held in Minsk on 21 June 2013. International experts, diplomats accredited in Belarus, representatives of the Orthodox, Catholic and Protestant churches and human rights activists took part in that event, which received fairly broad coverage in the media. I might add that an invitation to that event was also sent to the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights.

The round table made it possible to discuss in detail various aspects connected with the application of the death penalty in the Republic of Belarus. Moreover, many of the speakers, including experts from the Council of Europe, recognized the importance of gradual

movement towards the abolition of the death penalty, without force or external pressure and taking into account society's views in this regard.

As for the two recent instances of the handing down of death sentences, we should like to reiterate that the condemned persons have the right to appeal against these sentences in the highest court and also to assure you that in the likely event that appeals are made a fair trial will be guaranteed in strict accordance with the legislation of the Republic of Belarus and the principle of the rule of law.

Thank you, Mr. Chairperson.