Delegation of Switzerland

JOINT STATEMENT BY THE DELEGATIONS OF SWITZERLAND, SAN MARINO, NORWAY AND ANDORRA AT THE MEETING OF THE OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL

1 September 2011

Regarding the death penalty in Belarus

Mr. Chairperson,

Regarding the death penalty in Belarus, on 3 March of this year Switzerland called the attention of the Permanent Council to the cases of Mr. Grishkovets and Mr. Burdyko, whose appeals for clemency had been rejected by the President of Belarus. According to the information available to us, these two persons were executed during the month of July. We are dismayed at this news.

Also according to our information, the families of the two condemned men have not been officially informed of their executions. We call upon the Belarusian authorities to confirm the fate of these condemned persons to their families, who have a right to know the truth, and to return to them the bodies of the deceased.

Belarus is the last country on the European continent in which the death penalty is still in use. Executions are shrouded in secrecy and marked by a failure to respect the procedural guarantees required under international law.

We once again urge Belarus to declare a moratorium on capital punishment and to commute to imprisonment the sentences of all those who have been condemned to death.

As far as the general situation with regard to human rights in that country is concerned, Belarus should send a strong signal to the international community by showing respect for the commitments it has assumed within our Organization.

Our countries are opposed to the practice of capital punishment under any circumstances. Capital punishment represents a cruel and inhumane form of punishment, whatever the nature of the crime committed. It is for that reason that we call on all the participating States that are still applying this form of punishment – including the United States of America, which has just been mentioned – to abolish it as soon as possible.

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