



1340th Permanent Council of the OSCE, 21th October 2021

*Current issue: World Day against the Death Penalty*

**Joint-Statement**

Madam Chair,

I am speaking on behalf of Canada, Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway and my own country Switzerland.

The 10<sup>th</sup> of October marked the World Day against the Death Penalty. We are very encouraged by the global trend moving away from the use of capital punishment, which is also apparent within the OSCE region. We commend Kazakhstan and the US state of Virginia for taking the important step to abolish the death penalty formally in 2021. As of today, only two participating States continue to apply capital punishment: Belarus and the United States.

An argument often advanced for the death penalty is that it is necessary to reduce crime. However, the supposed deterrent effect of this punishment has been disproven by numerous studies. In addition, people who are already vulnerable are disproportionately affected by the death penalty and its application often reproduces preexisting biases, including discrimination based on gender or race.

In many cases, the application of the death penalty as well as the prolonged periods spent on death row amounts to torture or cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment or punishment. For instance, in the case of executions through lethal injection, it has been

found that inmates were still alive and trying to breathe while their lungs filled with fluid. Such cases seriously violate human dignity and go against the absolute prohibition of torture.

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.

Thank you, Madam Chair.