



PRESS RELEASE

Delegation of the European Union to Guyana, Suriname,
Trinidad & Tobago and for the Dutch Overseas Countries and Territories

Caribbean Regional Conference on the Abolition of the Death Penalty

Arthur Chung Conference Centre, Georgetown, Guyana, 23/24 November 2015

The European Union, in cooperation with the British High Commission and the International Commission against the Death Penalty, is organising a Caribbean regional conference consisting of keynote speeches and a number of panel discussion on aspects of abolition of the death penalty.

Participants in the conference include Lord Navnit Dholakia, UK All Party Parliamentary Group on Abolition of the Death Penalty; Ms Ruth Wijdenbosch, former Deputy Chair of the National Assembly of Suriname; Ms Asunta Vivó Cavaller, Secretary-General, International Commission against the Death Penalty; as well as representatives from organisations such as Greater Caribbean for Life, Guyana Human Rights Association, Justice Institute Guyana, Human Rights Commission Belize, *Réseau National de Défense des Droits Humains Haiti*, World Coalition Against the Death Penalty. The Ministry of Legal Affairs of Guyana will also be among the participants.

Participants in the conference represent the whole Caribbean region as well as other parts of the world – demonstrating that there is a strong and continuing trend towards the abolition of the death penalty in all regions of the world and that it is time for the Caribbean region to join this trend and become a death penalty free zone.

The conference shall consider the situation of the death penalty in the Caribbean region; experiences of other countries in abolition of the death penalty and whether the death

penalty works as a deterrent. During the discussions, various compelling reasons for the abolition of the death penalty will be highlighted including:

- *The ever-present risk of executing innocent people that exists in any justice system*
- *The arbitrary application of the death penalty that can never be ruled out*
- *That the death penalty is incompatible with human rights and human dignity*
- *That the death penalty does not deter crime effectively*

The European Union is the world's leading institutional actor in the fight against the death penalty and its action in this area represents a key priority of its external human rights policy. Experience in Europe and other parts of the world has taught us that the death penalty does not prevent an increase in violent crime, nor does it bring justice to the victims of such crimes.

The International Commission against the Death Penalty (ICDP) was established on 7 October 2010 and is currently composed of 17 Commissioners who are persons of high international standing from all regions of the world and who act with total independence and neutrality. ICDP opposes the death penalty under any circumstances, believing that it violates the right to life enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The work of the Commission is supported by a diverse group of 18 states from all regions of the world that are committed to abolition of the death penalty. Its secretariat is based in Madrid.

The death penalty undermines human dignity and violates the right to life proclaimed by the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and that it should never be used – regardless of the circumstances. The death penalty is the ultimate denial of human rights – it is cruel, morally wrong, violates basic human rights and harms society. The death penalty is inherently wrong and fundamentally flawed. Murder is wrong, whether committed by an individual or the state. Imposition of the death penalty contravenes the right to life and the right not to be subjected to cruel, inhuman or degrading punishment. Any miscarriage of justice – which is inevitable in any legal system – could lead to innocent persons being killed and is irreversible.



British
High Commission
Georgetown