

P R E S S R E L E A S E

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**Declaration by the Presidency on behalf of the European Union
on Cuba**

The European Union deeply regrets the decision taken in recent months by the authorities in Cuba to make increased use of the death penalty. The European Union regrets in particular that at least seven Cuban nationals have been executed since 1 January 1999. Finally, the European Union is concerned to note that some of these executions took place in complete secrecy; even the dates on which they took place were not made public.

The European Union attaches the greatest importance to respect for the right to life proclaimed in Article 3 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The European Union considers that the abolition of the death penalty contributes to the enhancement of human dignity and to the progressive development of human rights.

The European Union is concerned to note that the decisions taken in recent months by the Cuban authorities, notably the broadening of the scope of the death penalty by the law of 15 and 16 February 1999 reforming the Cuban Penal Code, the upsurge in executions, and the secrecy surrounding some of those executions, are at variance with the resolutions on the death penalty adopted in the last three years by an increasing majority of the Member States of the United Nations Commission on Human Rights. Paragraph 4 of Resolution 1999/61 of 28 April 1999, adopted for the first time by an absolute majority of the Member States of the Commission on Human Rights, and co-sponsored by seventy-two States representing all the continents, calls on States which still maintain the death penalty "progressively to restrict the number of offences for which the death penalty may be imposed; to consider suspending executions, with a view to completely abolishing the death penalty; to make available to the public information with regard to the imposition of the death penalty".

The European Union invites the Government of Cuba to contemplate acceding to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, Article 6 of which calls upon States which have not abolished the death penalty not to impose it for any but the most serious crimes. The European Union attaches the greatest importance to respect for the minimum standards laid down by that Article and to the safeguards guaranteeing protection of those facing the death penalty, set out in the annex to Economic and Social Council Resolution 1984/50 of 25 May 1984.

The EU firmly supports action against crime and shares the feelings of Cubans at the most heinous crimes, but it does not recognise the effectiveness of the death penalty as an instrument to prevent crimes. The European Union's view is that the use of the death penalty is, on the contrary, likely to increase the level of violence.

The European Union is working resolutely for the universal abolition of the death penalty; it calls on the authorities in Cuba to introduce a moratorium on executions.
