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## Statement by High Representative Catherine Ashton on the death penalty in Japan

Catherine Ashton, the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and Vice-President of the Commission, made the following statement today:

*"I deeply regret the execution by hanging of Hidenori Ogata and Kazuo Shinozawa on 28 July 2010, and the fact that this marks the resumption of executions in Japan after one year during which none took place. The European Union is opposed to the use of capital punishment in all cases and under all circumstances and has consistently called for its universal abolition. The EU believes that the death penalty is cruel and inhuman and that its abolition is essential to protect human dignity.*

*Although I deeply regret these executions, I welcome the latest efforts by the Minister of Justice to foster public debate in Japan about the death penalty and her decision to set up a panel to study the issue.*

*Japan and the EU are close partners on a wide range of human rights concerns around the world. The EU has on a number of occasions called on the Japanese authorities for a moratorium on the application of the death penalty, pending its complete legal abolition. This would bring Japan into line with the worldwide trend away from the death penalty. More than two-thirds of countries around the world have formally abolished or ceased to apply the death penalty, as called for by the UN General Assembly."*

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**P R E S S**

FOR FURTHER DETAILS:

Maja Kocijancic +32 498 984 425 - +32 2 298 65 70 - [Maja.Kocijancic@ec.europa.eu](mailto:Maja.Kocijancic@ec.europa.eu)

Darren Ennis +32 498 963 293 - +32 2 296 32 93 - [Darren.Ennis@ec.europa.eu](mailto:Darren.Ennis@ec.europa.eu)

[COMM-SPP-HRVP-ASHTON@ec.europa.eu](mailto:COMM-SPP-HRVP-ASHTON@ec.europa.eu)

[www.eeas.europa.eu](http://www.eeas.europa.eu)

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