



EUROPEAN COMMISSION - PRESS RELEASE

Commission extends control over goods which could be used for capital punishment or torture

Brussels, 20 December 2011 - The European Commission decided today to extend the list of goods subject to export controls, to prevent their use for capital punishment, torture or other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment. As of today, trade of certain anaesthetics, such as sodium thiopental, which can be used in lethal injections, to countries that have not yet abolished the death penalty, will be tightly controlled. Furthermore, the scope of the EU regulation has been enlarged to include other products such as spike batons that previously were not prohibited.

"I wish to underline that the European Union opposes the death penalty under all circumstances. The Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union states that no one shall be condemned to the death penalty, or executed. In this regard, the decision today contributes to the wider EU efforts to abolish death penalty worldwide. This is a first step in response to the calls of civil society organisations and the European Parliament to strengthen the EU legislation. It will be followed by a full review of the relevant regulation next year," said Catherine Ashton, High Representative for the Foreign Affairs and security Policy/Vice-President of the Commission.

Background:

Council Regulation (EU) No 1236/2005 concerning trade in certain goods which could be used for capital punishment, torture or other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment was adopted on 27 June 2005. It comprises an import and export ban for certain goods listed in Annex II and an export control regime for certain other goods listed in Annex III.

In March 2010, Amnesty International published a report asking for a number of amendments to this Regulation. The European Parliament repeated these requests in a resolution adopted on 17 June 2010. Since then, the Commission has examined possible ways to move forward in order to respond to these calls.

Today, the Commission adopted Regulation amending Regulation (EC) No 1236/2005 concerning trade in certain goods which could be used for capital punishment, torture or other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment. As a result:

- exports of short and medium acting barbiturate anaesthetic agents are subject to prior authorisation by national authorities;
- imports and exports of spiked batons are prohibited;
- imports and exports of electric shock sleeves and cuffs are prohibited (electric shock belts were already banned before).

The Commission will carry out an in-depth review in 2012 which may result in a proposal for amendment of Regulation 1236/2005 to be adopted by the European Parliament and the Council. The lists of goods may be further amended in parallel, if other goods are identified as needing particular surveillance