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**Declaration by the Presidency on behalf of the European Union
on the execution of Sean Sellers**

The EU deeply regrets the execution of Sean Sellers on 4 February 1999 in the State of Oklahoma. Mr Sellers was 16 at the time when the crime for which he was sentenced was committed. The United States had not executed a prisoner for a crime committed at that age since 1959. The EU had carried out demarches towards the American authorities at both federal and state level to prevent that execution.

Article 6 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) - to which the United States is a party - expressly states that the death penalty shall not be imposed for crimes committed by persons below eighteen years of age.

The EU recognizes that the United States has made a reservation to article 6 of the ICCPR. Nevertheless, the EU believes that Article 6 enshrines the minimum rules for the protection of the right to life and the generally accepted standards in this area. It notes that in the view of the UN Human Rights Committee, the US reservation is incompatible with the object and purpose of the convention and should be withdrawn.

The EU considers that the abolition of the death Penalty contributes to the enhancement of human dignity and progressive development of human rights. Therefore the EU works towards universal abolition of the death penalty.

The countries of Central and Eastern Europe Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia and Cyprus, associated to the European Union, and the EFTA countries, members of the European Economic Area, align themselves with this declaration.