



EU to launch global Alliance for Torture-Free Trade

Brussels, 7 September 2017

EU Trade Commissioner Cecilia Malmström today announced that the EU will launch an international Alliance for Torture-Free Trade.

The initiative – a joint effort with Argentina and Mongolia – aims to end the trade in goods used for capital punishment and torture and will be formally launched on 18 September during United Nations General Assembly week in New York.

The Alliance for Torture-Free Trade is a global effort by countries from all over the world to stop the trade in goods used for torture and the death penalty. International law bans torture in all circumstances. Yet despite this, tools of death and pain are still traded across the globe. These include batons with metal spikes, electric shock belts, and grabbers that seize people by the waist or limb while electrocuting them, chemicals used to execute people and the forced injection systems that go with them.

"These products serve no other purpose than inflicting terrible pain and killing people. We should never permit that they are traded like any other commodity. It's time for concrete action to shut down this despicable trade," said Commissioner **Malmström**.

"The EU's own laws in this field have had positive results, but producers of these goods try to get around such legislation. The more countries that sign up to cooperate, the more effective we will be. During my time as Commissioner and Member of the European Parliament, I have met victims of torture on many occasions – refugees, prisoners of conscience, death row inmates. I am convinced that trade policy can be a way to strengthen human rights around the globe.", Commissioner **Malmström** added.

The [launch on 18 September at the UN headquarters](#) is the result of a joint effort between the EU, Argentina and Mongolia, and will see countries signing up to a joint political declaration (the website of the Alliance – www.torturefreetrade.org – is now online). Some 50 UN member countries in total are expected to join on launch day, from around the globe – Africa, the Americas, Asia and Europe. The Alliance could become a basis for broader UN cooperation in this field.

By signing up to the Alliance, countries will be agreeing to the four action points:

- Take measures to **control and restrict exports** of these goods;
- Equip customs authorities with appropriate tools. The Alliance will set up **a platform to monitor trade flows**, exchange information, and identify new products;
- Make **technical assistance** available to help countries with setting up and implementing laws to ban this trade;
- **Exchange practices** for efficient control and enforcement systems.

The EU is committed to protecting human rights, and to the fight against torture and the abolition of the death penalty. The EU's tough legislation on trade in goods used for torture or the death penalty has already reaped results. Partly as a consequence of tougher EU rules, drugs for lethal injections have become more difficult to get and more expensive to buy.

But EU legislation only applies in Europe. Producers and traders of these goods try to circumvent EU laws, so the more countries that commit themselves to banning their export, the more effective efforts will be to put an end to the trade. The Alliance is a way to take concrete action and specific steps to stop the trade in such goods globally, making it significantly more difficult to obtain them.

Background

One of the aims of the EU's foreign policy is to promote respect for fundamental rights. Its commitment to stopping torture and abolishing capital punishment includes since 2005 [measures to prevent the trade](#) in goods that could be used for capital punishment or torture or other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment.

The EU lists banned products and provides for a fast-track mechanism to make sure that new products can also be banned. It has in place rules for export controls to prevent listed medicinal products from

being used for capital punishment, bans supplying brokering services related to any listed goods, and technical support to third countries. Last year, the EU tightened its legislation even further to make sure it includes a ban on transit through EU territory and in ports, and promotion, such as at trade fairs.

For more information

Alliance for Torture-Free Trade [website](#), including information about the goals of the Alliance and registration for the launch event.

Downloadable [videos and photos](#) are available on EbS, including images of torture tools and an interview with Commissioner Malmström.

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