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OSCE Human Dimension Implementation Meeting Warsaw, 11-22 September 2017

Working session 14 and 15: Economic, social and cultural rights as an answer to rising inequalities

Mr/Madam Moderator,

I am honoured to be able to speak on behalf of the EU and its Member States.

As we have explored over the previous 13 sessions, human rights are universal, indivisible and interrelated. They apply equally to all without discrimination of any kind, and are born of the inherent dignity of the human being.

The EU attaches the same importance to economic, social and cultural rights as we do to civil and political rights; they are interdependent - Economic, Social and Cultural Rights must be respected, protected and realised on an equal footing with Civil and Political Rights. We promote and protect them worldwide, both here and in other multilateral fora, and raise specific issues during policy dialogues and work with civil society organisations.

In particular, engagement for the protection of economic, social and cultural rights has been reinforced in the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights strategy, which specifically refers to the promotion of economic, social and cultural rights, including the right to an adequate standard of living and core labour standards, but also to corporate social responsibility, in particular through the implementation of the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights.

The International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural rights - ratified by and 54 of our 57 participating States, including all EU Member States - covers a broad range of issues: the right to work, freely chosen and in favourable conditions, and with the right to form trade unions; family life and marriage, including the right to choose when and who to marry; housing, food and the right to live free from hunger; physical and mental health; the right to education;



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the right to take part in cultural life and to enjoy the benefits of scientific progress. Each one of these, and its link to the OSCE's comprehensive concept of security could have been a topic for discussion in itself.

These rights are also further described in other conventions, such as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, the Convention on the Rights of the Child, and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

The OSCE has a number of commitments covering economic, social and cultural rights, dating from the Helsinki Final Act. However, given the links between economic, social and cultural rights and civil and political rights, the commitments are much broader than can be listed here. For example, the right to form trade unions is protected by freedom of association. The right to safe and healthy working conditions, or to an adequate standard of living, are protected by the right to be free from torture or degrading or inhuman treatment.

Economic, social and cultural rights are embedded in the work of the OSCE. The right to an education is a central part of the work of the High Commission on National Minorities, and the Contact Point for Roma and Sinti Issues. A lack of access to education, and the ability to stay in school, affects girls in particular. They must have the power to make their own choices about their health, their relationships, whether or not to have children and how many; the freedom to live without violence; and the opportunity to become leaders in their societies and to fulfil their potential through a quality education and a worthwhile career.

The right to freely choose your work is a fundamental part of the work of the Office of the Special Representative in her work to combat Trafficking in Human Beings, as is the right to an adequate standard of living, and to be free from hunger.

Every part of the OSCE, including the senior leadership, the Secretariat and the institutions, the field missions and participating States delegations, has a responsibility to ensure gender equality, both in terms of remuneration and fair wages, but also equal opportunity to be promoted.



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So while we sometimes hear calls for us to devote more time to economic, social and cultural rights, we believe that our discussions of human rights and fundamental freedoms frequently covers the issues described as economic, social and cultural rights.

We also believe that this is not just the responsibility of those of us who devote our time to the Human Dimension. Human rights are universal; they apply equally to all without discrimination of any kind. They also apply equally in the first and second dimensions of the OSCE. As we discuss security, economic or environmental issues we urge participating States and the OSCE to recognise the cross dimensional aspect of human rights, both economic, social and cultural rights, but also civil and political rights.

Turning to the issue of rising inequality, the UN Sustainable Development Goals provide us all with a comprehensive framework to reduce inequality. SDG 10 and SDG16 specifically acknowledge the role of human rights and the rule of law in reducing inequality. They provide a strong framework for participating States in their efforts to reduce inequality and to 'Leave No One Behind'.

In conclusion, we reiterate that human rights are interdependent, interrelated and indivisible. We cannot separate civil and political rights from economic social and cultural rights. If our goal is to address inequality, we need to consider human rights in the whole. The OSCE, with its comprehensive concept of security, is uniquely placed to respond.

Recommendation

- All participating States to recognise their responsibility to actively promote Economic, Social and Cultural Rights to their citizens, without discrimination towards any group, and to ensure effective monitoring of those rights including appropriate forms of redress.

The Candidate Countries the FORMER YUGOSLAV REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA*, MONTENEGRO*, SERBIA* and ALBANIA*, the Country of the Stabilisation and Association Process and Potential Candidate BOSNIA and HERZEGOVINA, and the EFTA countries LIECHTENSTEIN and NORWAY, members of the European Economic



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Area, as well as UKRAINE, the REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA, ARMENIA, GEORGIA, ANDORRA and SAN MARINO align themselves with this statement.

* The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Albania continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.