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STATEMENT BY THE PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE REPUBLIC OF  
SERBIA AMBASSADOR VUK ŽUGIĆ AT THE WORKING SESSION 2 –  
INTERNATIONAL COVENANTS ON HUMAN RIGHTS AND THEIR IMPORTANCE FOR  
THE OSCE HUMAN DIMENSION

OSCE HUMAN DIMENSION IMPLEMENTATION MEETING

20 September 2016, Warsaw

In the year marking the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, a key instrument that provides a wide range of civil and political rights, we want to use this opportunity and inform you about our national mechanism aimed to advancing implementation of the obligations stemming from this important Covenant.

Under our Constitution, generally accepted rules of international law and ratified international treaties form an integral part of the national legislation and are being directly implemented. Serbia is a State Party to eight principal international instruments in the field of human rights protection, and supports the work and cooperates under special procedures of the United Nations, as evidenced by its open invitation to all thematic mandates since 2005.

Additionally, the Republic of Serbia has been actively participated in Universal Periodic Review (UPR) - human rights monitoring mechanism which has been implemented since 2008. In 2014, during 2<sup>nd</sup> UPR 67 UN Member States made 144 recommendations out of which Serbia accepted 139, including those on establishing a national body or mechanism for monitoring the implementation of recommendations from the UPR.

In 2014 we have established the Council for Monitoring the Implementation of the Recommendations of the UN Human Rights Mechanisms entrusted with the task of monitoring the implementation of recommendations of UN human rights mechanisms, by proposing measures to implement the recommendations, giving opinions on the record of human rights in the reporting period, providing a professional advice on the human rights situation and the results achieved in the implementation of recommendations.

More detailed information on the jurisdictions of the Council, the process of its establishment and lessons learned has been presented in detail this morning at a side event hosted by the Office for Human and Minority Rights of the Republic of Serbia and its partners. Let me just highlight a few features of this mechanism:

Council consists of a Chairperson and nine members - appointed officials of the ministries responsible for justice, foreign affairs, home affairs, labour, employment, social affairs, education, science and technological development, health, culture and information, government administration and local self-government and from the European Integration Office.

The two independent institutions – the Ombudsman and Commissioner for the Protection of Equality – and the Parliamentary Committee for Human and Minority Rights and Gender Equality are to be invited to the sessions of the Council. Two permanent Civil Society Organization representatives will participate at every session of the Council while other representatives can be invited to the Council sessions as well.

In order to ensure a follow-up to the implementation of the recommendations, the Council requested the relevant Ministries to appoint contact persons and their alternates to be entrusted with the updating of the implementation of activities envisaged under their respective Action Plans.

Council also records all recommendations, activities undertaken, relevant institutions to take part in the implementation, takes care of concrete timelines, performance indicators, comments made by Civil Society Organizations and other relevant stakeholders to UN human rights mechanisms.

The establishment of the Council show commitment of the Government of the Republic of Serbia to improve the process of reporting and cooperation with UN human rights mechanisms. Additionally, it seeks to enhance the cooperation among the state institutions, as well as state institutions and other relevant stakeholders, and raise public awareness of the importance of human rights protection.

Last but not the least, Serbia recently opened Chapter 23: Justice and Fundamental Rights in its European integration process, thus showing its commitment to uphold EU's founding values – the rule of law and respect for human rights. This is yet another step that will bring us closer in advancing the implementation of all laws and policies on human rights, with the overall aim of ensuring full protection for all our citizens.

During the introduction of the mechanism, the Office for Human and Minority Rights was given considerable support by the OSCE Mission to Serbia and by the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights and we would like to thank them for their assistance. Based on this positive experience, we particularly welcome the recommendation as proposed by the EU, that the OSCE strengthens its links with the Office UN High Commissioner for Human Rights with the aim of ensuring complementarity and better achievement of the common goals.