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**Human Dimension Implementation Meeting
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EU statement at the closing session of the OSCE Human Dimension Implementation Meeting 2009

Mr Chairman, Excellences, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a great honour and privilege for me to address the closing session of the 2009 OSCE Human Dimension Implementation Meeting on behalf of the European Union.

Twenty years ago the map of Europe was changed dramatically when we witnessed the fall of the Berlin wall and the dawn of a new future for Europe. What happened then - here in Warsaw and in so many other places behind the iron curtain - was the European revolution for freedom, democracy and unification, that continues to shape our part of the world and inspire so many others. Europe was transformed – but not as so often happened in the past – by soldiers, weapons and war. It was transformed by the free choice of free nations to come together through structures and policies of integration which has no parallel in human history. The most notable development was the enlargement of the European Union. It was also the starting point for the process that transformed the CSCE

Postal address
Obere Donaustrasse 49-51
1020 Vienna, Austria

Visitor's address
Obere Donaustrasse 49-51
1020 Vienna, Austria

Telephone
+43 (0) 1 217 53 0

Fax
+43 (0) 1 217 53 380

E-mail: osse-del.wien@foreign.ministry.se
euoffice@osce.org

into the OSCE and the adoption of the Charter of Paris for a New Europe.

History however, did not end there. New and old challenges keep reminding us that much remains to be done. The past two weeks have allowed us to have an open and frank dialogue on an issue that concerns us all – the urgent need for improved implementation of our common commitments in the Human Dimension. We have had the opportunity to listen to the first hand experience and advice of civil society, including prominent human rights defenders, from across the OSCE region. The EU highly appreciates the unique platform for dialogue with civil society provided by this meeting, and the many interesting side-events. We stress the importance of the work and dedication of the human rights defenders to ensure that human rights are respected in the OSCE area. The EU remains firmly committed to the open and free participation of non-governmental organisations in Human Dimension meetings organized by the OSCE, as is set out in our commitments.

Mr Chairman,

The universality of human rights is at the foundation of our work, and our human dimension commitments apply equally and to all participating States. The commitments were not drawn up by one group of countries and imposed upon another. They were freely entered into by all of us and remain of direct and legitimate concern to all participating States, as the Human Dimension Implementation Meeting has exemplified.

The EU and its member states have taken careful note of comments and recommendations made in relation to the situation within the EU. We do not regard such comments as reproaches or as interference in internal affairs. For the EU, it is clear that fulfilling our common commitments in the human dimension is a living process that requires constant attention. There is no such thing as a perfect democracy and we should all work hard and strive for perfection.

The EU regrets that, once again, the Turkmen delegation did not participate in the meeting and we remain concerned by the situation in Turkmenistan. We encourage the Turkmen government to make use of this opportunity for dialogue with civil society and benefit from their assistance in our common endeavour to uphold human dimension commitments.

Mr Chairman,

Despite the advances made during the last twenty years, there are still persons in our region that are harassed or killed for expressing their views, beliefs or just for belonging to a certain group. Worrying trends limiting the freedom of expression as well as violence against and harassment of human rights defenders can be noted in some OSCE participating States. The EU has, in different sessions of this meeting, drawn particular attention to the situation in a number of participating States. The EU calls upon these participating States to make use of the expertise offered by the OSCE Institutions and field missions and to fulfill their human dimension commitments as a matter of urgency.

The EU particularly welcomed this year's focus on the *Freedom of expression, free media and information* and hopes that the very useful discussion and the recommendations made will be taken into account in the run-up to the Ministerial Council in Athens. Equally, the special attention given to the situation of *Roma and Sinti and, in particular, early education for Roma and Sinti children* deserves to be followed-up with concrete action. Moreover, *Human Rights Education* continues to be an important means to strengthen knowledge of and thereby respect for human rights.

Mr Chairman,

The dialogue on the future of European Security, offers a useful opportunity to intensify our efforts to restore and rebuild trust and confidence between the participating States. We should use this dialogue to address ways and means to improve implementation and follow up of existing Human Dimension commitments. We should also further strengthen the work of the OSCE institutions, in particular in the field of freedom of the media and in support of human rights defenders. ODIHR has a crucial role to play and the EU remains firmly committed to its autonomy.

In Georgia the security, human rights and humanitarian situation on the ground, including the situation of IDPs and refugees, remain fragile. The EU encourages the OSCE institutions to continue and if possible expand their activities in Georgia, including in South Ossetia and Abkhazia. The EU would welcome a follow-up of ODIHR's 2008 report entitled Human rights in the war affected areas following the conflict in Georgia.

The EU is looking forward to cooperating closely with the incoming Kazakh Chairmanship of the OSCE, and also to discussing priorities for the Human Dimension in 2010. The EU believes that it is important that there is an overall balanced agenda that takes into account our human dimension commitments in the three fields of Human rights and fundamental freedoms, Democratic institutions and the rule of law as well as Tolerance and non-discrimination. The EU has taken note of the proposal to hold an OSCE High Level Tolerance Conference and welcomes the opportunity to discuss it further in Vienna, including in the larger context of the overall Kazakh agenda for the human dimension.

The EU recalls that it is crucial that the OSCE Chairmanship upholds and complies with international human rights standards and OSCE commitments. It is further of outmost importance that the Chairmanship promotes and defends the core OSCE values and principles in all three dimensions. It is the role of any Chairmanship to act as an honest and impartial broker, implementing the decisions by the Ministerial and Permanent Councils. The EU stands ready to contribute to the success of the Kazakh Chairmanship, which will be measured by the same standards as all Chairmanships before it.

Mr Chairman,

As in previous years the EU would like to use this opportunity to make some suggestions in regard to next year's human dimension events. The EU would in particular like to focus on the following topics:

- Human Rights Defenders and Independent National Human Rights Institutions;

- Freedom of Association and Assembly;

The EU would also welcome focus on the following topics:

- Strengthening of human dimension implementation mechanisms within the OSCE;
- Freedom of Expression and Media;
- Tolerance and non-discrimination, in particular hate crimes and discrimination based on grounds such as ethnic origin, religion, sex, age, disability or sexual orientation and gender identity;
- Respect for human rights in the fight against terrorism;
- Gender and conflict prevention, including in light of the up-coming 10th anniversary of UNSC resolution 1325 on Women, peace and security and the 5th anniversary of OSCE MC decision 14/05 on Women in conflict prevention, crisis management and post-conflict rehabilitation as well as UNSC resolution 1820 on sexual violence in situations of armed conflict;
- Rule of Law, especially as concerns public administration;
- Rights of persons belonging to national minorities;
- Prevention of torture and abolition of the death penalty.

On the last subject I would like to take this opportunity to draw your attention to the commemoration tomorrow, on October 10th, of the “European Day against the Death Penalty” which was established last year by the EU and the Council of Europe.

Finally, I would like to express the European Union’s gratitude to the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) - Director Janez Lenarčič and his team - for the excellent organisation

and management of this event, to the Greek Chairmanship for its overall leadership and to our Polish hosts for their kind hospitality.

The Candidate Countries Turkey, Croatia and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia*, the Countries of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidates Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Montenegro, EFTA country Norway, member of the European Economic Area, as well as Ukraine and the Republic of Moldova align themselves with this statement.

Thank you for your kind attention.

* Croatia and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.