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Human Dimension Implementation Meeting
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EU Statement, Working Session 16: Human Dimension Activities

Mr Chairman/Madame Chairperson,

Most conflicts in the OSCE region derive from human rights violations, including disregard of rights of persons belonging to minorities, and from ethnic tensions. Efforts to enhance respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, rule of law and good governance are therefore crucial to reaching sustainable and comprehensive security in our region.

The OSCE has, within its Human Dimension, created unique and autonomous institutions to assist participating States in upholding the commitments made in this field. These institutions have developed distinct comparative advantages, for example within the field of election observation and early warnings based on the situation for national minorities and freedom of the media, as well as an extensive field presence.

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The OSCE Office of Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR), under the able leadership of Director of Janez Lenarčič, continues to tackle our common challenges within the Human Dimension with conviction and determination. The EU would like to assure ODIHR and Ambassador Lenarčič of its unyielding support in this endeavour. In the area of election observation, ODIHR is a true centre of excellence. The conduct of election observations continues to be highly professional and contributes to making our region progressively more democratic.

The OSCE, including ODIHR, the other institutions and the field missions, make important contributions to the improvement of the human rights situation in the region. There is a continued need to monitor and report on the compliance of participating States with their human dimension commitments, especially in the areas of the right to life, liberty and security of person, a fair trial and freedom of assembly and association, with particular attention to human rights defenders, as well as in the use of the death penalty. The EU further appreciates the training and education provided by ODIHR and the field missions to assist participating States in improving the human rights situation and in enhancing the rule of law. The regular events organised by OSCE institutions to highlight special topics, such as for example gender and tolerance issues, is another well-received way to promote a higher understanding of the importance of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. We particularly value the cooperation with representatives of civil society, that institutions and field missions have in fulfilling their mandates.

The situation for human rights defenders in some participating States continues to be of grave concern for the EU. The EU has drawn attention to a number of cases in the Permanent Council

since the last Human Dimension Implementation Meeting. Particular concern has been raised in relation to attacks against journalists. The EU strongly supports the work of the Representative on Freedom of the Media, Miklos Haraszti, to address and highlight such incidents as well as his contributions to increasing the freedom of expression in the region at large.

The EU attaches great importance to relentless efforts of the High Commissioner on National Minorities, Knut Vollebaek, to identify and seek early resolution of ethnic tensions that might endanger peace, stability or friendly relations between OSCE participating States. There is a continued need to adopt further measures to alleviate tensions related to national minorities in the OSCE region.

The EU further highly appreciates the work of the Special Representative and Co-ordinator for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings, Eva Biaudet. The challenges trafficking impose respects no borders and is relevant for all three OSCE dimensions.

The success of the Human Dimension and its activities is a common responsibility. All participating States stand to gain from, and have a responsibility to assist in projects and programmes within this field – either through facilitating project implementation on the ground and/or through contribution of financial, or other, resources. Coordination and co-operation with relevant national and international organisations is essential to avoid unnecessary duplication and to create synergies.

As a way of concluding, the EU would like to offer the following observations, while also recalling its specific recommendations made in the other working sessions of this meeting:

- The cross-dimensional work of the OSCE and activities within the Human Dimension are key to ensuring sustainable security in the region. Priority should be given to activities which focus on those areas which are subject to serious and persistent breaches of commitments.
- All participating States should assist in projects and programmes within the human dimension.
- All participating States must live up to the commitments made in the 1990 Copenhagen Document, cooperate fully with ODIHR elections observations missions and where needed make use of the assistance offered by ODIHR and the OSCE field missions to address weaknesses in elections systems and strengthen democratic institutions.
- OSCE Institutions and field missions are encouraged to give priority to the development of programmes and projects aimed at enhancing the protection of human rights defenders and improving their capacity.
- Cooperation with civil society is essential to improve implementation of commitments and we encourage both participating States and OSCE Institutions and field missions

to continue working with civil society, in order to make best possible use of their expertise.

Thank you for your kind attention.

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, Montenegro, and Serbia, EFTA countries Iceland, and Norway, members of the European Economic Area, as well as Ukraine, the Republic of Moldova and Georgia align themselves with this statement.

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