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STATEMENT BY THE EUROPEAN UNION AT THE 970th MEETING OF THE OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL

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In response to the three Personal Representatives of the Chairperson-in-Office for tolerance and non-discrimination

We thank Rabbi Andrew Baker, Ambassador Adil Akhmetov and Ambassador Tetiana Izhevskaya for their comprehensive reports on their activities over the past year. As we had the opportunity to express very clearly at the High-Level Conference in Tirana on 21 and 22 May 2013, and in September in Warsaw during the annual Human Dimension Implementation Meeting, the European Union (EU) is firmly committed to combating all forms of discrimination, regardless of their motive.

In this regard, we are particularly concerned at the rise in intolerance, racism and discrimination in the OSCE area, including in the EU Member States. All these hateful reactions, whether racist, anti-Semitic, anti-Muslim, anti-Christian or directed against other religious communities, or whether homophobic and based on sexual orientation and gender identity, or even against Roma and Sinti, are contrary to all the values of human rights and a source of conflict.

The commitments undertaken in Copenhagen (1990) but also in Madrid (2007) are a clear indication of the importance of combating all forms of discrimination, regardless of the grounds. Human rights and fundamental freedoms apply to all human beings without exception. Respect and mutual understanding cannot be partially applied or only involve some of our citizens.

The European Union has a solid legal basis for combating discrimination and racism. In this long-term struggle, a comprehensive approach is necessary to discourage the formation of prejudices and prosecute and punish hate crimes, to eradicate discrimination in all sectors, to combat hate speech and promote mutual respect as a part of freedom of expression.

Education on human rights and tolerance for all ages plays a leading role in the fight against racism. Teaching students about the dramatic consequences of intolerance in our collective history, such as the Holocaust, should be part of the curriculum.

Effective implementation of this comprehensive approach also depends on reliable data to identify the relevant trends. In this regard, just like the annual report by the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) on hate crimes, the data collected by the

European Union Fundamental Rights Agency (FRA) is a valuable tool for guiding the EU Member States in their policies. The FRA will publish a report on anti-Semitism on 8 November and will hold a conference on hate crimes on 12 and 13 November.

As for the activities of the three Personal Representatives, we noted with interest the ongoing consideration by the future Swiss Chairmanship as to how to make their work more effective. Greater synergy in the work of the Personal Representatives with the ODIHR's Tolerance and Non-Discrimination Department, but also, in terms of combating discrimination against Roma, with the Contact Point for Roma and Sinti Issues, would enhance the effectiveness of the OSCE in this field, as would better co-ordination with the Council of Europe and other relevant international bodies. The European Union is in favour of the three Personal Representatives operating in synergy with the Special Representative of the Chairperson-in-Office on Gender Issues and, within their mandates, helping to combat discrimination and violence against women by introducing a gender perspective to their areas of work.

Better co-ordination between the activities of the three Personal Representatives themselves should also be sought. Whilst the specific nature of the types of discrimination concerned may justify an individual approach, it is important to avoid compartmentalization of our activities so that we can promote efficiency and firmness in our comprehensive approach to combating all forms of intolerance. It seems essential to us to maintain the common ground in the fight against intolerance, namely the fight against the hatred of others because of their differences and the affirmation of the equal dignity of all human beings. These values are at the heart of the OSCE's commitments. They should also be at the heart of our efforts to combat all forms of intolerance.

The candidate countries the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia¹, Montenegro¹ and Iceland², the countries of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidate countries Albania and Bosnia and Herzegovina, the European Free Trade Association country Norway, as well as the Republic of Moldova, Andorra and San Marino, align themselves with this statement.

1 The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Montenegro continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.

2 Iceland continues to be a member of the European Free Trade Association.