



EUROPEAN UNION

Human Dimension Implementation Meeting Warsaw, 3 October 2011

EU Statement – Session 10: Discussion of human dimension activities

Ms/Mr Moderator

I am honoured to speak on behalf of the European Union.

The EU continues to attach the greatest importance to the work of the OSCE in the Human Dimension. The failure of States to respect and uphold human rights and fundamental freedoms is one of the most common causes of conflict and unrest. The commitments undertaken by OSCE participating States in the Human Dimension are an important element in building confidence, resolving conflict and attaining sustainable and comprehensive peace and security in our region. It is incumbent on all participating States to maintain those commitments and to work to ensure their full implementation throughout the OSCE area. We should also be alive to the need to update human dimension commitments, in the light of new challenges and changed circumstances.

Within its Human Dimension, the OSCE has established unique and autonomous institutions with the necessary expertise to assist participating States in upholding their OSCE commitments. The EU appreciates the work which is undertaken throughout the year to prepare programme proposals and implement a wide range of project activities. All participating States stand to gain from, and have a

responsibility to assist in, projects - whether through facilitating project implementation on the ground or through the provision of expertise, personnel or financial and other material resources. Indeed, the success of the Human Dimension and its activities is a common responsibility, as reiterated in the Astana Commemorative Declaration, which recalled that commitments undertaken in the field of the human dimension are matters of direct and legitimate concern to all participating States and do not belong exclusively to the internal affairs of the State concerned.

The EU strongly supports the essential work carried out by ODIHR, which celebrates its 20th anniversary this year. Under the able leadership of the recently re-appointed Director, Mr Janez Lenarčič, ODIHR's projects and programmes continue to provide invaluable support and assistance in the human dimension. ODIHR's widely-recognised expertise in election observation work has greatly assisted participating States in adhering to democratic principles, and the EU would like to reiterate its resolute support for ODIHR's observation methodology, which has been used as a model by numerous international actors – including the EU - for their own election observation activities. The EU urges all participating States to engage fully with the election observation process and to ensure systematic follow-up to recommendations contained in election observation reports. Where weaknesses are identified, participating States are encouraged to avail of assistance offered by ODIHR and OSCE field missions. The EU also expresses its full support for ODIHR's trial monitoring activities, and welcomes its intensified work with National Human Rights Institutions.

ODIHR's Focal Point for Human Rights Defenders and National Human Rights Institutions undertakes important work in monitoring the situation of human rights defenders, and in supporting their work through training and development activities. The EU strongly supports such activities and remains deeply concerned about the situation of human rights defenders in some participating States.

Mr/ Madam Moderator,

A free, vibrant and pluralistic media is an indispensable component of a democratic society. The EU continues to prioritise freedom of expression and freedom of the media, and strongly supports the vital work of the Representative on Freedom of the Media, Ms Dunja Mijatovic, in monitoring, drawing attention to, and addressing, attacks against journalists, and promoting freedom of expression in the OSCE region. We value work done to date to highlight issues relating to new media, including the internet and social media, and look forward to further work in this area. The EU supports further urgent measures to strengthen protections for journalists and others who defend the right to freedom of expression. The EU also believes that the time is now ripe to update existing media freedom commitments in order to enhance their implementation in the light of technological changes, and so as to ensure that the Internet remains an open and public forum.

The work of the High Commissioner for National Minorities, Mr. Knut Vollebaek, continues to serve an important function in the human dimension, complementing his key role in identifying and seeking early resolution of ethnic tensions, which have too often been exploited to orchestrate violence against minorities. The discreet nature of the work of the High Commissioner does not relieve participating States of the duty to take further measures to alleviate tensions related to national minorities within their borders.

The EU also highly appreciates the work of the Special Representative and Coordinator for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings, Ms Maria Grazia Giammarinaro, and encourages her to continue to work to raise the profile of this issue, to ensure co-ordination of OSCE efforts in combating trafficking in human beings across all three dimensions of the OSCE, and to strengthen cooperation with other relevant organisations. The EU hopes that a meaningful text in support

of the fight against trafficking in human beings will be adopted at the Ministerial Council in Vilnius.

As the largest regional security organisation under Chapter VIII of the UN Charter, the OSCE is unique in making the protection of human rights an integral part of its comprehensive concept of security. The OSCE should leverage its comparative advantage and redouble efforts to ensure full implementation of UNSCRs 1325 and 1885 throughout the region. In tandem with this, efforts to promote gender equality throughout the organisation should be intensified.

In conclusion, the EU would like to offer the following general observations, bearing in mind the specific recommendations made in other working sessions of this meeting:

- The EU urges all participating States to take account of, and follow up, recommendations made by OSCE institutions. The opportunities afforded by Human Dimension events and Human Dimension Committee meetings for the exchange of experience and expertise between participating States and with civil society should also be exploited in full, and the EU would welcome the development of further opportunities for review of the implementation of the shared commitments of participating States within the Human Dimension;
- The EU believes that priority should be given to activities which focus on those areas of the human dimension which are subject to serious and/or persistent breaches of commitments. Greater use should be made, in this context, of reports, findings and recommendations adopted by, or submitted to, other multilateral organisations, such as the UN Human Rights Council, treaty bodies, the Council of Europe and other regional and international organisations;

- OSCE institutions and field missions, as well as participating States, are encouraged to extend the participation of civil society in the human dimension activities of the OSCE and to give priority to the development of additional programmes and projects to strengthen protections for civil society, including human rights defenders.

The candidate countries TURKEY, CROATIA*, the FORMER YUGOSLAV REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA*, MONTENEGRO* and ICELAND**, the countries of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidate countries ALBANIA, and SERBIA, the European Free Trade Association country NORWAY, member of the European Economic Area, as well as UKRAINE, ARMENIA and ANDORRA align themselves with this statement.

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

**Iceland continues to be a member of the EFTA and the European Economic Area.