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OSCE HUMAN DIMENSION IMPLEMENTATION MEETING 2006

EU statement for the working session 11: Discussion of human dimension activities (with special emphasis on project work)

9 October, Warsaw

Mr Chairman,

The EU continues to attach the greatest importance to the OSCE's human dimension activities. We welcome the key role of the organization's institutions and field missions to this effect, not least when it comes to all the efforts that are made to draft programme proposals, to put these in place and to implement a wide spectrum of project activities. All participating States have an interest in and a responsibility to assist in the implementation of such projects and programmes – either through facilitating project implementation on the ground and/or through the contribution of financial, or other, resources. As resources are limited, it goes without saying that co-ordination and co-operation with other relevant national and international organizations are imperative. For the same reason, efforts should be made to give priority to programme activities on those topics which are subject to serious, persistent and flagrant breaches of commitments in specific participating States. Follow-up on the impact of project work is equally important. Furthermore, we would like to see an increased focus on the link between security, development, and respect for human rights in OSCE project activities to further enhance the reinforcing link between the three dimensions.

The promotion of free and fair elections is perhaps the activity with which the OSCE is most associated in the public mind and will continue to be accorded the highest priority by the EU. This applies to both election assistance and election observation. The OSCE has established a deservedly high reputation for its standards in this field, and participating States should be vigilant against any attempts to retreat from agreed commitments and widely accepted standards. ODIHR is widely acknowledged to be a pre-eminent election monitoring agency and to be using a credible and comprehensive methodology that is also used by European Union Election Observation Missions. We should, of course, continue to take account of and adapt to changes in election technologies. We must also be alert for opportunities to strengthen and improve existing commitments or to adopt new commitments in the light of experience. We would like to underline, however, that this should be done without undermining the existing acquis.

The OSCE has carried out a number of important election observation missions this year. What some of these missions have demonstrated is that abuses of the democratic process do not necessarily take place on polling day but often in the pre-polling stage through unfair registers, misuse of public resources, limits on media and other abuses. In this respect, we believe that the role of Long Term Observers should be looked at to see if it should be enhanced and strengthened. This should be done without diminishing the number and role of Short Term Observers. In addition, we would once again encourage more follow-up activity post elections, with a view to improving practices and procedures. Participating States should inform the Permanent Council of the steps they have taken to give effect to

the recommendations of Election Observation Missions. We believe that the further training of election observers might also be looked at.

Activities to combat anti-semitism, racism and intolerance are now an established part of the OSCE's agenda. We look forward to continuing activity in this regard by ODIHR and would welcome a strengthening of its role. We thank the Personal Representatives of the CiO for their efforts over the past year and will be carefully considering how the OSCE can build on their work in advance of the Ministerial Council. We thank the Kazakh government for their hosting of the very useful Tolerance Implementation meeting on 'Promoting Intercultural, Inter-religious and Interethnic Understanding' in Almaty in June. We also commend the OSCE's very useful contribution to the Alliance of Civilisations Initiative.

Promotion of gender equality throughout the OSCE area and the mainstreaming of gender in all areas of OSCE activity continue to be high priorities for the EU. The EU welcomes the appointment of Gender Focal Points. They constitute an important resource and their role is central in the planning of new project activities. The basis for the organization's gender mainstreaming activities lies in the Gender Action Plan and in Ministerial Council Decision 14 of 2005 on women in conflict prevention, crisis management and post conflict rehabilitation. The role of the OSCE Secretary General and Heads of Missions is central for the implementation of the plan, in the organization as such and in the field. We welcome and strongly support the efforts by ODIHR to promote participation in economic and political life of women in the Caucasus and Central Asia.

Trafficking in human beings continues to be a matter of great concern throughout the OSCE area, in countries of origin, transit and destination. To effectively combat trafficking in human beings, cooperation and commitment by all participating States is needed, as well as coordination and cooperation with other relevant parts of the OSCE and international organizations. The problem of trafficking spans not only the borders of States, but the three dimensions of the work of the OSCE itself, having, as it does, political, economic and human dimension aspects, and we are therefore pleased to see that it is engaging the attention of all concerned elements within the organisation. The EU is pleased that participating States could agree on a new anti-trafficking mechanism. We would like to record our appreciation of the important work done by the former Special Representative, Dr. Helga Konrad, and look forward to working closely with her successor.

Promotion of human rights education among the young as one of the OSCE's long-term commitments was accelerated in 2005 by an OSCE-wide, multi-cultural pilot project. This made use of an agreed teaching tool, designed for use throughout the whole OSCE area, to promote the universal rights of the child. The aim of the project was to develop knowledge and values, as well as skills in respecting and implementing human rights among the young. An evaluation indicated that the project had significantly raised awareness among children of their rights and had reinforced the capacity of educators to teach about human rights. These activities were reaffirmed in the Ljubljana Ministerial Council Decision on the Promotion of Human Rights Education and Training in the OSCE Area in December 2005. The increasing number of participants and the widening of the geographical scope of the human rights education project in the OSCE area in 2006 confirms the value of these efforts.

The EU continues to speak in favour of further improvements of the format of the HDIM.

The Acceding Countries Bulgaria and Romania, the Candidate Countries Turkey and Croatia¹, the Countries of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidates Montenegro and

¹ Croatia and the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process

Serbia, EFTA country Norway, member of the European Economic Area, as well as Ukraine and the Republic of Moldova align themselves with this statement.