



**EUROPEAN UNION**

**OSCE Special Permanent Council No 1115  
Vienna, 13 October 2016**

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**EU statement in response to the report by Director Michael Link  
on HDIM**

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We would like to thank Director Michael Link for his report. We would also like to thank ODIHR, Poland as a host country and the German Chairmanship for organizing the meeting in a particularly difficult context this year, while noting that the late adoption of the agenda had an impact on its preparation. We showed great flexibility to compromise with respect to the agenda of this year's HDIM and we note this without prejudice for the future.

HDIM is an opportunity for all of us to be held to account in relation to our OSCE commitments. It is a unique platform for dialogue and interaction with civil society representatives, human rights defenders and journalists. We commend the many participating States who treat HDIM as an opportunity to engage meaningfully with civil society and the international community on issues of concern. We, the European Union and its Member States, listened carefully to the concerns and recommendations directed at us. We remain committed to addressing our own challenges and shortcomings and to continuing a genuine dialogue with independent civil society.

We welcome this year's increased participation by civil society. We thank all those who actively engaged in the discussions, some of them giving disturbing testimonies of their experiences and the situation they face in their respective countries. We commend their courage and we reaffirm our constant commitment to support and protect human rights defenders.

We once again stress the principle that participating States should not use organisations set up to promote government views to discredit independent voices and distract attention from real issues and challenges.

We remain concerned by alarming reports that some States tried to intimidate civil society representatives - or their family members – for taking part in HDIM. This is unacceptable.

We regret that, while facing criticism or because of presence of some activists, some participating States chose to leave the meeting. We trust that these participating States will recognise the added value of the participation of civil society at HDIM and engage in the future. It is crucial that independent civil society's participation at HDIM is safeguarded.

At the same time, we welcome the decision by Turkmenistan to send again a delegation, after having notably been absent for some years. This year's meeting identified many areas where participating States are falling short of implementing their OSCE commitments. Discussions pointed out to the ongoing or even increasing restrictions on civil society and crackdown in human rights and fundamental freedoms across the OSCE region. We see a downward trend in this regard across much of Central Asia, Azerbaijan and Russia.

The human rights violations in areas of eastern Ukraine controlled by Russia-backed separatists and the particular precarious situation of Crimean Tatars in Crimea, illegally annexed by Russia, received much attention at the meeting. We share the concerns expressed and we reiterate our call for full, immediate and unrestricted access for the OSCE institutions as well as for other international human rights institutions in these areas. We remain firm in our non-recognition of the illegal annexation of Crimea and Sevastopol by Russia.

Discussions also drew attention to the situation in Turkey with regard to the rule of law and fundamental freedoms. The EU has a strong commitment to dialogue and common work with Turkey, including ensuring that democratic principles, human rights and the rule of law are respected.

The EU remains committed to strengthening dialogue and cooperation regarding the implementation of human dimension commitments with all participating States.

HDIM has proven, once more, that OSCE commitments and their implementation are more relevant than ever and we call on all participating States to live up to them and reverse existing violations. The meeting has also reaffirmed participating States' need for the valuable support of the autonomous institutions of this organisation.

We encourage ODIHR to continue its efforts in raising the profile of the meeting and attracting independent civil society from across the OSCE region. We also have a role to play in this regard. We welcome some innovative ideas at this year's HDIM and we would be in favour on increasing the interaction during the sessions of HDIM.

We see the upcoming OSCE Ministerial Council as a good opportunity to take forward recommendations from the HDIM meeting with the aim of reaffirming and strengthening our OSCE Human Dimension commitments. We very much welcome the input of civil society representatives in this regard and we believe we should consider ways to enable civil society to present its recommendations during the Ministerial Council.

We express, again, our sincere thanks to the organisers and hosts of this year's human dimension implementation meeting, ODIHR, the German Chairmanship and Poland.

The Candidate Countries the FORMER YUGOSLAV REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA\*, MONTENEGRO\* and ALBANIA\*, the Country of the Stabilisation and Association Process and Potential Candidate BOSNIA and HERZEGOVINA, as well as the REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA and SAN MARINO align themselves with this statement.

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