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OSCE Human Dimension Implementation Meeting Warsaw, 22 September - 3 October 2014

EU Closing Statement

Mr Chairperson, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen

The European Union wishes to thank the Swiss Chairmanship and ODIHR for their excellent organisation of this year's Human Dimension Implementation Meeting. As ever, it has been an important opportunity to take stock of the human rights situation in our region. Human Dimension commitments are a matter of direct and legitimate concern to all participating States and are a cornerstone of our OSCE comprehensive security concept. These commitments have proven to be more relevant than ever.

We remain vigilant regarding the situation in and around eastern Ukraine and Crimea. We are appalled by the killing of ten persons in a school during shelling on Wednesday in Donetsk, and by the violent death of a member of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) delegation yesterday. We remain concerned at the negative consequences for human rights. During this meeting we have heard further alarming reports about the precarious position of the Crimean Tatar community and the human rights violations in eastern Ukraine and in Crimea. These issues have also been highlighted by the UN and OSCE in different reports, which clearly indicate that the human rights violations did not precede but rather accompanied and followed the emergence of various pro-Russian separatist groups in eastern Ukraine and Crimea. The EU has condemned the aggression by Russian armed forces on Ukrainian soil and called upon the Russian Federation to immediately withdraw all its military assets and forces from Ukraine. We support all efforts to find a sustainable political solution to the crisis, respectful of the sovereignty, territorial integrity, unity and independence of Ukraine. The ongoing monitoring and engagement by the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission and OSCE



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Institutions are of crucial importance and we continue to support their work. We look forward to the OSCE/ODIHR observation of the Ukrainian Parliamentary Elections on the 26th October.

Mr Chairperson,

We also want to express our deep thanks to the representatives of independent civil society for their bold and brave testimonies which have highlighted the challenges, and in some cases serious shortcomings, in implementing OSCE commitments in their respective states. We attach great importance to the existence of independent and vibrant civil society as well as its participation in OSCE events. The EU remains deeply concerned at mounting pressure on civil society in several OSCE participating States, particularly in the Russian Federation, but also Azerbaijan. Civil society are an important partner for the implementation of human dimension commitments. Their work and independence should neither be restricted nor instrumentalised. We are troubled by reports of alleged threats against HDIM NGO participants following interventions made at this meeting and regard this as totally unacceptable. We call on participating States to refrain from such intimidations, in accordance with the commitments they have subscribed to. We will continue to monitor this situation carefully.

Whilst we have heard many positive examples of how the OSCE is engaging with participating States to improve the human rights of their citizens, a negative trend is unfortunately all too clear. Gaps in the implementation of commitments appear to be widening rather than closing. Fundamental freedoms continue to be unduly restricted. The shrinking space for discourse and dissent, restrictions on media freedom and media pluralism, and the scope and scale of attacks on journalists and human rights activists, is unacceptable. So too is impunity from prosecution that the attackers often enjoy. Moreover, appalling accounts of torture and inhumane treatment in some states continue to emerge. We wish to reiterate that torture is an



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abhorrent violation of human rights, human integrity and human dignity. The practice of enforced disappearances and the treatment of political prisoners are also deeply concerning. We strongly encourage the governments of Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan to engage with the legitimate questions that have been posed to them over the course of this meeting regarding such practices. In this context, we express our regret that the delegation of Turkmenistan decided not to participate in the meeting, thus missing a valuable opportunity for an open and frank dialogue on this and other issues with participating States and civil society.

We also recognise that there are human rights challenges in the EU and have listened carefully to the concerns and recommendations directed at us. Gender based violence remains a problem in many of our societies. More also needs to be done to better integrate Roma and Sinti communities and to protect the rights of other marginalised groups, including from hate crimes. We are committed to addressing these and other issues and to engaging in a genuine dialogue with our OSCE partners and with civil society.

We greatly appreciate the expert assistance the OSCE provides to participating States to support them in implementing our common commitments. We reiterate our support for the mandates and activities of the OSCE autonomous institutions. We will continue to draw on this expertise within the EU, as well as to support OSCE engagement in other parts of the region.

We also underline that human rights and fundamental freedoms must be realised for all, without discrimination, and observe that more needs to be done to ensure that this principle is affirmed by all participating States. We call once more on all participating States to abide by their commitments, to cooperate fully with the OSCE, including its autonomous institutions, and make full use of the assistance it offers. We also hope that the Helsinki plus 40 process will provide us with further opportunities to strengthen the implementation of our human dimension commitments.



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We look forward to discussing further in Vienna the recommendations emerging from this meeting. The EU encourages the Swiss Chairmanship to involve representatives of civil society in that discussion in order to make the exchange as participatory as possible. We hope that at the Basel Ministerial Council participating States will agree on a robust response to address the violations of OSCE principles and commitments and threats to human rights we are witnessing in our region, in particular related to the Ukraine crisis. We also look forward to listening to the recommendations from civil society at the Ministerial Council. We thank the Chairmanship for the draft decision they have already proposed, which we are reflecting on. The EU stands ready to work constructively and in earnest in the coming weeks with delegations in preparing substantive decisions on pertinent human rights issues, and we look forward to further proposals from the Swiss Chairmanship in this regard.

Finally, the EU wishes to thank the Government of Poland for its hospitality, and reiterate our appreciation to ODIHR, the Swiss Chairmanship and all those who contributed to the effective conduct of the meeting, including the moderators, keynote speakers, rapporteurs, note-takers, and interpreters.

The Candidate Countries the FORMER YUGOSLAV REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA*, MONTENEGRO* and ICELAND+, as well as UKRAINE align themselves with this statement.

* 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 of the European Economic Area.