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EU Statement on the International Day for Human Rights

Today, December 10, we celebrate the International Day for Human Rights, and commemorate the adoption, in 1948, of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. It is a day to reaffirm that human rights are universal, indivisible, interdependent and interrelated and to reconfirm unequivocally our OSCE commitments in the fields of human rights and fundamental freedoms, democracy and the rule of law as well as tolerance and non-discrimination. The international community should support the strengthening and promotion of democracy, respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms all over the world.

These rights and commitments provide a basis upon which our governments can protect the inherent dignity, life and freedom of human beings, and thereby also promote peace and security. History has consistently shown that without respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms there will be no security, and without security, human rights and fundamental freedoms can never be fully enjoyed. This link is recognised in the Helsinki Final Act and it is a

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cornerstone of the concept of comprehensive security on which the OSCE is based. The EU welcomes the reconfirmation of this concept at the Athens ministerial and the fact that it will be a guiding principle for the Corfu process.

For the EU, the universality, equality and interdependence are crucial aspects of the human rights concept embodied in the Universal Declaration. Abiding by our obligations in ensuring equal enjoyment of human rights by all is a living process in all states and also a common endeavour. In this regard, the OSCE provides an invaluable forum in which we, the participating States, can review—with the assistance of our institutions and field operations—the implementation of our commitments, including through peer-review. The OSCE also gives us an excellent opportunity for dialogue between states and civil society, including human rights defenders. In this regard, we also encourage the OSCE to strengthen its cooperation with other international organisations relevant in the field of Human Rights.

The past decade and a half has seen important progress as regards governments' respect for human rights and commitment to democracy and the rule of law. In the OSCE we have adopted a wide range of human dimension commitments. But we need to improve their implementation in order to halt the negative trend that we at times witness. The EU has, on a number of occasions in the Permanent Council, expressed the need to improve implementation of our commitments, in particular those related to freedom of expression, media, religion or belief, association and assembly, the rule of law, as well as prohibition of torture. The EU also continues to believe that the abolition of the death penalty is essential to

protect human dignity, and to the progressive development of human rights.

At this year's Ministerial Council we were very close to reaching consensus on strengthening our commitments on fundamental issues pertaining to freedom of media and the rule of law. We regret that the decision on combating hate crimes did not include a specific reference to sexual orientation and gender identity. At the same time, we welcome the adoption of the Athens MC Declaration highlighting the 25th anniversary of the UN Convention Against Torture. The EU remains committed to furthering our work in these important areas and trusts that we can pursue them next year. In particular, the EU would wish to see at least one Supplementary Human Dimension Meeting and one Special Day at HDIM devoted to the fundamental freedoms.

The EU is convinced that the OSCE, its institutions and field operations, can make a difference on human rights and that our work can be improved. We therefore welcome as a constructive step the agreement by all participating States to enhance our dialogue on human rights, fundamental freedoms and the rule of law, as well as the implementation of all commitments, in the framework of the Corfu dialogue and as an indispensable part of an agenda that addresses our real and shared security concerns.

The candidate countries TURKEY, CROATIA* and the FORMER YUGOSLAV REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA*, the countries of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidate countries ALBANIA, BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA, MONTENEGRO and SERBIA, the European Free Trade Association

countries and members of the European Economic Area ICELAND, LIECHTENSTEIN and NORWAY, as well as UKRAINE, the REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA and GEORGIA align themselves with this statement.

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