



**EUROPEAN UNION**

## **OSCE Human Dimension Implementation Meeting Warsaw, 11–22 September 2017**

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### **EU Closing Statement**

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Mr Chairperson, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

At the outset, the European Union would like to thank the OSCE's Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, as well as the Austrian OSCE Chairmanship, for organizing another valuable Human Dimension Implementation Meeting. We also wish to thank Poland, which has once again kindly hosted this meeting.

HDIM is the most important event in the OSCE Human Dimension, providing a unique platform for discussing challenges to the implementation of the human rights commitments participating States took upon themselves. HDIM is an opportunity for all of us to be held to account in relation to our OSCE commitments. The European Union and its Member States have listened carefully to the concerns and recommendations directed at us. We acknowledge our own challenges and shortcomings, and we remain committed to addressing them and to continuing a genuine dialogue with independent civil society. It is an essential partner for the implementation of Human Dimension commitments.

We regret that some participating States chose to leave, as is the case of Turkey, or not to participate at all, as Tajikistan and Turkmenistan at the 2017 HDIM. We reiterate that by not participating in HDIM, these States missed a valuable opportunity for an open and frank dialogue with other participating States and civil society. We hope that their decision not to participate in HDIM 2017 is not a sign of a diminished will to engage in the Human dimension and the OSCE.

We thank the human rights defenders, representatives of civil society and journalists who have actively engaged in the discussions. Some of them gave worrying testimonies on their experience 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



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defenders. Their work and independence should not be restricted. Participating States should not use supposed non-governmental organisations to promote government views: they discredit independent voices and distract attention from real issues and challenges.

We would like to take this opportunity and remind all the participants that core values of the EU, as well as our common values in OSCE, are based in respect for human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law and respect for human rights, including the rights of persons belonging to minorities. We therefore expect that participants in OSCE Human dimension events, including HDIM, keep this firmly in mind and refrain from intolerant and discriminatory speech that does not contribute to constructive discussions.

Ms Moderator,

The negative trends observed in Central Asia in recent years persist: erosion of the rule of law, restrictions on civil society and limiting of human rights and fundamental freedoms. Against this backdrop, we welcome the increased engagement this year from the delegations of Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan. We hope that their engagement marks a renewed commitment to human rights and fundamental freedoms.

We remain deeply concerned by the downward trend in respect for fundamental freedoms, including freedom of expression, association and of the media in Russia. We welcome the first hand testimony of the many civil society actors affected by the actions of the Russian authorities including through the implementation of the Foreign Agents Law. Many also have referred to severe violations of the human rights of LGBTI persons in Chechnya, which must be thoroughly investigated.

The EU remains worried about the situation of human rights and fundamental freedoms in Belarus and is increasingly concerned by deteriorating situation in Azerbaijan.

We are also seriously concerned with the growing number of arrests and imprisonments of journalists in Turkey, and the increasing restrictions imposed on civil society and human rights activists.

Within the OSCE region, areas affected by armed conflicts are more vulnerable to violations of human rights and disregard for the rule of law, grave situations of ill treatment in



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detention, widespread impunity, disinformation campaigns to mention just a few. Let us touch on two areas that have received scrutiny over these two weeks.

In Ukraine, we remain concerned about the human rights situation in areas held by Russia backed separatists, in particular the use of arbitrary detention. We repeat our concern over the ongoing persecution of national minorities in illegally annexed Crimea, particularly the Crimean Tatars, and of human rights defenders, lawyers and journalists. We restate our strong condemnation of the illegal annexation of Crimea and Sevastopol by the Russian Federation and we will not recognise it.

We remain concerned about discrimination against ethnic Georgians residing in the Georgian regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia. In this regard, the European Union reiterates its firm support for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Georgia within its internationally recognized borders.

In conclusion, we reiterate our full support for the work and the mandates of the OSCE autonomous institutions, as key assets of the OSCE. We are confident that under the newly appointed heads they will continue to play a proactive and independent role in promoting human rights and democracy, true to the comprehensive approach to security that is the hallmark of the OSCE. We call on all participating States to recognise the very important role the OSCE autonomous institutions play and resource them adequately to allow them to carry out their mandates.

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, align themselves with this statement.

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