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EUROPEAN UNION

OSCE Permanent Council Nr 929 Vienna, 8 November 2012

EU statement in response to the report by the Director of ODIHR, H.E. Ambassador Janez Lenarčič

The European Union warmly welcomes H.E. Ambassador Janez Lenarčič back to the Permanent Council and thanks him for his informative report on the 2012 Human Dimension Implementation Meeting (HDIM). We would like to reiterate our full support for the work performed by Ambassador Lenarčič and his staff.

We highly commend the professional, effective and transparent manner in which ODIHR fulfils its mandate.

We would like to congratulate Ambassador Lenarčič and his staff for successfully organising this year's HDIM, which remains the largest regional conference devoted to human rights and democracy issues.

We welcome the lively debates that took place on the entire spectrum of human dimension work, both in the working sessions and in the numerous side events. We particularly welcome the high level of interest in the working sessions on fundamental freedoms.

We have heard with great interest the recommendations made here today by the Director of ODIHR on each topic discussed at HDIM. Our assessment is that the debates we had at HDIM have shown that lack of media freedom, including safety of journalists, in some participating States continues to be alarming; certain OSCE participating States continue to violate freedom of peaceful assembly and association; human rights defenders continue to be harassed and arbitrarily detained or imprisoned; cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment and punishment have been reported; two participating States maintain the death penalty and carry out this cruel and undignified punishment; elections are not always free, fair and transparent; rule of law and an independent judiciary are lacking in some participating States; gender equality is still elusive; the situation of many Roma and Sinti remains dire; the

independent functioning of national human rights institutions is at times obstructed; intolerance and discrimination against several groups, including LGBT, persist across the OSCE area. This assessment shows how much the activities of ODIHR are needed to help better achievement in the implementation of OSCE commitments in all these fields.

The many valuable contributions by civil society from the entire OSCE space again contributed to the success of the HDIM. Unrestricted NGO participation at human dimension events is what makes these events unique and gives them a comparative advantage compared to other human rights conferences. We support a more robust follow-up to human dimension events, particularly HDIM and on the recommendations we have heard from the Director here today, and we remain committed to enhancing the effectiveness of these events. We consider that holding the HDIM earlier in the year and agreeing a standard agenda for it would enable us to better review the implementation of our human dimension commitments.

Mr Chairman,

The presence of Ambassador Lenarčič at the Permanent Council gives us a valuable opportunity to also address other crucial aspects of ODIHR's work. We commend the Office for the successful conduct of a series of important election observation missions in the past months. On each of these occasions we noted with satisfaction that joint statements of preliminary conclusions were issued and presented by ODIHR and the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, as foreseen in their co-operation agreement. This sends clear messages as well as an unequivocal assessment to the participating States concerned. We regret that a joint statement was not delivered by the short-term observation mission of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly together with the long-term observation mission conducted by ODIHR, following the Presidential elections in the United States of America. We strongly call on the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly to remain committed, together with the ODIHR, to their co-operation and complementarity, in line with the 1997 Cooperation Agreement as well as MC Decision 19/06. Experience over the past two years has proven this to be feasible.

Regarding ODIHR's election-related activities, we would like to reiterate our full support for the Office's election observation methodology, which is well-established,

internationally recognised and even emulated by other organisations, including the EU. It is important that participating States adhere to their commitment of issuing timely invitations, without restrictions, to ODIHR to observe their elections. It is essential that follow-up on ODIHR's election-related recommendations is improved, also by voluntary reporting of participating States on their related implementation measures.

In conclusion, we would like to thank Ambassador Lenarčič and his dedicated staff for their excellent work and wish them all the best in their future activities.

The Acceding Country Croatia*, the Candidate Countries the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia*, Montenegro*, Iceland+ and Serbia*, the Countries of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidates Albania and Bosnia and Herzegovina, and the EFTA country Liechtenstein, member of the European Economic Area, as well as Ukraine, the Republic of Moldova, Georgia, Andorra and San Marino, align themselves with this statement.

* Croatia, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia 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.