



EUROPEAN UNION

OSCE Human Dimension Implementation Meeting 2012 Warsaw, 4 October 2012

EU statement – Session 17

DISCUSSION ON HUMAN DIMENSION ACTIVITIES

Mister Moderator,

The European Union continues to attach the greatest importance to the work of the OSCE in the Human Dimension. Most conflicts or unrest in the OSCE region and beyond derive from the failure of States to respect and uphold human rights and fundamental freedoms, including freedom of expression and freedom of assembly and association. The need to preserve, respect and fully implement the commitments undertaken by OSCE participating States in the Human Dimension is, therefore, of paramount importance in building confidence, resolving conflict and attaining lasting and comprehensive peace and security in our region. While addressing implementation gaps in our common commitments, we should also bear in mind that changed circumstances necessitate the regular review and update of existing Human Dimension commitments in order to effectively face new challenges, without, however, undermining the existing acquis.

Within its Human Dimension, the OSCE has established unique autonomous institutions with the necessary expertise and methodology to assist participating States in upholding their OSCE commitments. The EU welcomes to this effect the key role of the Organisation's institutions, missions and field operations, not least when it comes to all the efforts undertaken throughout the year to prepare programme proposals and implement a wide range of project activities. All participating States have an interest in and a responsibility to assist in the implementation of projects - whether through their facilitation on the ground or the provision of expertise, personnel or financial and other material resources.

As resources become more and more scarce, it goes without saying that coordination and cooperation with other relevant international or regional organizations in the field is imperative, in order to avoid unnecessary duplication of efforts and to create effective synergies. The EU believes that priority should be given to activities which focus on those areas of the Human Dimension which are subject to serious and/or persistent breaches of commitments. Greater use should be made, in this context, of reports, findings and recommendations adopted by, or submitted to, other multilateral fora, such as the UN Human Rights Council, treaty bodies, the Council of Europe and other relevant regional and international Organisations;

The OSCE Office of Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, under the excellent stewardship of its Director, Ambassador Janez Lenarčič, has proved to tackle our common challenges with conviction and determination, through its various programmes and projects in the whole range of the Human Dimension. ODIHR's widely-recognised expertise in election observation work has greatly assisted participating States in adhering to democratic principles. The EU would like to reiterate its unwavering support for ODIHR's observation methodology, which is

based on the principles of independence, impartiality and professionalism and has been used as a model by numerous international actors – including the EU - for their own election observation activities. The EU urges all participating States to engage fully and timely with the election observation process in all its stages, without imposing undue restrictions or limitations and to ensure systematic follow-up to recommendations contained in election observation reports. Where weaknesses are identified, participating States are encouraged to avail of assistance offered by the ODIHR and OSCE field missions.

In the same regard, the EU reiterates its position on the complementary roles of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly and the ODIHR and we would like to encourage them to continue co-operating in the spirit of partnership and on the basis of the 1997 Co-operation Agreement, as well as MC Decision 19/06.

The EU also expresses its full support for ODIHR's trial monitoring, and welcomes its intensified work with National Human Rights Institutions. ODIHR's Focal Points for Human Rights Defenders and National Human Rights Institutions as well as its panel of experts on freedom of Assembly and Association undertake important work in monitoring, inter alia, the situation of human rights defenders and representatives of civil society, as well as in supporting their work through training and development activities. The EU strongly supports such activities and remains deeply concerned about the situation of human rights defenders in some participating States.

Mister Moderator,

A free, vibrant and pluralistic media is an indispensable component of a democratic society. The EU continues to highly prioritise freedom of expression and freedom of the media, as it was aptly reflected in the EU human rights strategic framework and action plan, adopted on 25 June. We strongly support the invaluable work of the Representative on Freedom of the Media, Ms. Dunja Mijatović, in monitoring, drawing attention to, and addressing attacks or arrests on journalists, as well as promoting freedom of expression in the OSCE region. The EU supports further urgent measures to strengthen safety of journalists and others who defend the right to freedom of expression both online and offline.

We also greatly value work done by the Representative's Office to date to highlight issues relating to digital media, including the internet and social media, and look forward to further progress in this area. We reiterate that human rights and fundamental freedoms are universal and do not change with the introduction of new technologies. People have the same rights online as they have offline. These also include such rights as freedom of assembly and association.

The EU believes that the time is now ripe to adapt existing media freedom commitments in order to enhance their implementation in the light of technological changes, while reaffirming that our OSCE commitments apply equally across all mediums and regardless of technologies. We look forward to ensuring progress in this field and concrete deliverables at the forthcoming Ministerial Council in Dublin.

The work of the High Commissioner on National Minorities, Ambassador Knut Vollebaek, continues to serve a crucial function also in the Human Dimension, complementing his key role in providing early warning and seeking early action with regard to tensions involving national minority issues. The discreet nature of the work of the High Commissioner does not relieve participating States of the duty to take further measures to alleviate tensions related to persons belonging to national minorities within their own borders. Next year, the Office of the HCNM will mark its

20th anniversary. We look forward to its anniversary conference to be held in The Hague in March 2013.

The EU would also like to highlight the importance it attaches to the work of the Special Representative and Coordinator for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings, Dr. Maria Grazia Giammarinaro, and encourages her to continue to work to raise the profile of this issue, to ensure co-ordination of OSCE efforts in combating trafficking in human beings across all three dimensions of the OSCE, and to strengthen cooperation with other relevant organizations.

As the largest regional security Organisation under Chapter VIII of the UN Charter, the OSCE is unique in making the protection of human rights an integral part of its comprehensive concept of security. The OSCE should leverage its comparative advantage and redouble efforts to ensure full implementation of UNSCRs 1325 and 1885 throughout the region. In tandem with this, efforts to promote gender equality throughout the Organisation and combat gender-based violence should be further intensified.

In conclusion, the EU would like to offer the following general observations, bearing in mind the specific recommendations made in other working sessions of this meeting:

- The EU urges all participating States to take account of and properly follow up recommendations made by the OSCE institutions. The opportunities afforded by Human Dimension events and Human Dimension Committee meetings for the exchange of experience and expertise between participating States and with civil society should also be fully exploited and the EU would welcome the development of further opportunities for review of the implementation of our shared commitments within the OSCE Human Dimension in light of the (ongoing) review of Human Dimension Events;
- Participating States should explore ways to adapt and reinforce existing OSCE commitments in specific areas of the Human Dimension, including freedom of expression and media freedom;
- OSCE institutions and field missions, as well as participating States, are encouraged to extend the participation of civil society in the human dimension activities of the OSCE and develop additional programmes and projects to strengthen the protection of civil society, including human rights defenders.”

I thank you, Mister Moderator

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 countries Liechtenstein and Norway, members of the European Economic Area, as well as Ukraine, the Republic of Moldova, Armenia, 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.