



## EUROPEAN UNION

# OSCE Human Dimension Implementation Meeting Warsaw, 10 - 21 September 2018

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## EU statement - Closing Session

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Madam Chairperson,

The European Union would like to thank the Italian Chairmanship and the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights for their thorough work in preparing and organising the Human Dimension Implementation Meeting. We consider that the meeting has taken place, in line with our standing commitments to hold HDIM on an annual basis, and with the same status as in previous years. We regret that Turkey did not join consensus on the Decision regarding the HDIM agenda and also chose not to attend the meeting, missing a valuable opportunity to engage in dialogue with other participating States and civil society.

HDIM remains an unique platform for engaging with civil society organisations and for listening to independent voices, exchanging information and good practices, but moreover an opportunity for all of us to be held to account in relation to our OSCE commitments. We thank all the human rights defenders, representatives of civil society and journalists who have actively engaged in the discussions. The European Union and its Member States have listened to the concerns and recommendations directed to us. We do acknowledge our own challenges and shortcomings. We remain committed to addressing them and to continuing a genuine dialogue with a wide spectrum of independent civil society, which remains a valuable partner for the implementation of our commitments. The EU acknowledges that the open and inclusive character of the OSCE in relation to civil society organizations makes events like HDIM unique and that this must be maintained, as set out in our joint commitments. We need to avoid any action that will unduly limit civil society participation.

We heard in the last two weeks numerous interventions, moving and brave testimonies both in the plenary sessions, as well during side-events. Many speakers deplored the suppression of human rights and fundamental freedoms, the attacks and mounting pressure



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faced by human rights defenders, including women human rights defenders, the intimidation and violence against journalists and other media actors, as well as increasing intolerance in many parts of the OSCE region. We heard tragic stories of human rights abuses and violations of international obligations and OSCE commitments. Regrettably, once more, some voices were not heard as the practice of imposing travel bans is still used by some participating States. We are also concerned by reports of intimidation and reprisal of civil society representatives or their family members for exercising their rights by taking part in HDIM. We call on all participating States to refrain from such unacceptable actions and abide by their OSCE commitments. It is States' responsibility to ensure that those who speak up for human rights, be it in their home countries, or in any international fora, are protected.

We have engaged actively during all sessions of HDIM, pointing out the EU policy and approach, sharing good practices, issuing recommendations and expressing concerns about certain developments in the OSCE area. We would like to highlight only a few aspects in this closing statement.

We remain deeply concerned about the dire situation of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the City of Sevastopol since its illegal annexation by Russia which we condemn and will not recognise. We regret the attempts by some participants of this meeting to create confusion regarding the capacity under which they take the floor, or to use a legitimate opportunity for discussion and dialogue to make points relating to a situation that is in contradiction with Helsinki principles. But their attempts to whitewash the human rights situation in Crimea have not succeeded. We call on Russia to ensure full and unimpeded access of international human rights monitoring missions and human rights NGOs to Crimea. A human rights crisis continues to mount also in areas held by Russia-backed armed formations in eastern Ukraine. The full access of all human rights organisations to the non-government controlled areas and the speedy delivery of humanitarian assistance are needed. We repeat our call on Russia to free all Ukrainian citizens, illegally detained, put on trial, or convicted in Russia or the Crimean peninsula, including Oleg Sentsov and Volodymyr Balukh.



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The human rights situation in Russia continues to fall below its OSCE commitments and international human rights obligations. We have raised our concerns about the ongoing crackdown on civil society in Russia, the curtailing of rights and freedoms, in particular freedom of expression, association, peaceful assembly, religion or belief, as well as the shrinking space for independent media and the use of disinformation. We denounce the human rights abuses in Chechnya, and we call for thorough investigation and for ensuring accountability for the grave violations of human rights, including the persecution of LGBTI persons and the harassment of human rights defenders. We urge the Russian authorities to release Oyub Titiev and Yuri Dmitriev and protect all human rights defenders.

We will continue to follow closely the situation with regard to human rights, democracy and the rule of law in Turkey, Azerbaijan and Central Asia, which is in many cases deeply worrying. We welcome that Tajikistan and Turkmenistan decided to participate in this year's HDIM and strongly encourage them to continue engaging with civil society in addressing the issues raised during this HDIM. Our call on Turkmenistan to engage with civil society and its citizens, particularly with the families of the "disappeared", remains fully valid. We particularly welcome the increased engagement of Uzbekistan in the meeting and encourage them to continue making further progress.

Fundamental freedoms, including freedom of expression – both online and offline - and freedom of religion or belief, democracy, the rule of law and equal rights represent the core of our OSCE commitments and should guide all participants in all OSCE events, including HDIM. We are determined to promote these values actively, working in partnership, to demonstrate that what we have in common is the best defence against those who would seek to divide us. We take issue with the intolerant statements that were made during the meeting. To those who have called here for unequal treatment and discrimination we say that the Universal Declaration on Human Rights is clear that "all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights" and "everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration".

The last two weeks have proven, once more, that OSCE commitments are more relevant than ever and we call on all participating States to live up to them and reverse existing violations. All participating States must respect the mandates of ODIHR, HCNM and RFoM as



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essential instruments in their efforts to fulfil the OSCE commitments. We reiterate our constant support for the work and the mandates of the three autonomous institutions. We must also ensure that the OSCE institutions are adequately resourced to play their indispensable role.

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

Thank you.

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, and the EFTA country ICELAND, member of the European Economic Area, align themselves with this statement.

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