

**STATEMENT BY THE EUROPEAN UNION AT THE
1141st MEETING OF THE OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

6 April 2017

On the situation of homosexuals in Chechnya

The European Union (EU) is concerned about several reports from the press and civil society and testimonies from victims of mass arrests of men in Chechnya owing to their actual or alleged sexual orientation, cases of torture and three deaths.

The reaction of the Chechen authorities, which have sought to deny the very existence of homosexuals among the population of Chechnya, or suggested that if there were any they would be killed by their own families, fails to ensure the safety of their citizens. What is worse is that this reaction has created a climate of impunity conducive to the perpetuation of such crimes.

These acts of discrimination and intolerance towards homosexuals in Chechnya, if they are actually proven, constitute crimes and a clear violation of the Russian Federation's international commitments to fundamental freedoms and to combating intolerance and promoting equality, as provided for in the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and other international commitments, including those within the OSCE.

It is up to the authorities of the Russian Federation to dissociate themselves from the hate speech of the Chechen authorities and unequivocally reject such views. We also call on the Russian authorities to do everything possible to put an end to these violent acts, protect the victims and ensure the safety of all Chechen citizens without discrimination. The allegations of arrests and murders need to be clarified by means of thorough investigations. Civil society representatives active in Chechnya must also be protected in their efforts to defend human rights in the republic.

The EU reiterates its commitment to promote equality and combat discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity throughout the world.

The candidate countries the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia¹, Montenegro¹ and Albania¹, the country of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidate Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Free Trade Association countries and members of the European Economic Area Iceland and Norway, as well as Georgia, align themselves with this statement.

1 The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro and Albania continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.