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OSCE Supplementary Human Dimension Meeting

Prevention of Torture

Vienna, 10-11 April 2014

EU Statement – Closing Session

Mr Chairperson,

1. The European Union wishes to thank the Swiss Chairmanship and ODIHR for organising this timely and important event.
2. Torture is an abhorrent violation of human rights, human integrity and human dignity. It is completely counter to the principle of ensuring human security that the OSCE concept of comprehensive security is founded upon. Our OSCE and other international commitments are abundantly clear. The prohibition of torture is absolute and unconditional. There are no exceptions permitted under international law.
3. We reiterate that the persistent, and in some parts of the OSCE region, widespread, occurrence of torture and other forms of cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment is of grave concern to the EU. Credible reports abound from numerous sources, that law enforcement personnel in several OSCE participating states routinely engage in torture, abuse, enforced disappearances and violence to coerce confessions from suspects. Indeed, we have heard some of these personal testimonies in the last two days. In a discussion that has focused on systems and processes, these have been an important reminder of the very real human rights violations that continue to take place.



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4. All too often governments in OSCE participating States do not hold officials accountable for such actions and prosecution rates against perpetrators remain much too low. The culture of impunity that is allowed to exist in some participating States has been rightly highlighted, and much more must be done to eradicate it.
5. The European Union is resolutely opposed to the practice of torture. We adopted guidelines against torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment and punishment in 2001 to support our efforts in combating torture and updated these most recently in 2012. The guidelines identify specific policy instruments to draw upon and provide an operational tool for the European Union in its relations with third countries, including OSCE participating states, as was encouraged by one panellist in this morning's session.
6. A question that has been posed repeatedly in the different sessions is what further assistance do participating States need to help them more fully implement their commitments to prevent and eradicate torture. The EU stands ready to assist participating States in their implementation efforts, particularly through the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights.

Mr Chairperson

7. As we conclude this important meeting, the situation is clear. Our current efforts to combat torture are not enough. OSCE participating states must act more effectively and with a greater sense of urgency in order to combat this scourge
8. The European Union strongly supports the Swiss Chairmanship in prioritising this issue in 2014. Eradicating torture and ill treatment is a key objective of the



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EU Human Rights Policy. It is ten years since we have had a substantive meeting like this on the issue of torture. This has been too long. We believe the OSCE is well placed to address this issue and to add value to efforts by the United Nations, the Council of Europe and other international and national actors in this area.

9. We also commend the Swiss Chairmanship for the steps they have taken to increase the engagement of civil society in our human dimension events this year. Civil Society is a crucial actor in the fight against torture, and we have spoken about some of the areas where their involvement should be increased. We want to thank them for recommendations they have made in our meeting following the seminar which took place ahead of this meeting.
10. At the supplementary human dimension meeting on torture eleven years ago, we managed to produce a list of important recommendations to guide our fight against torture in the OSCE-area. The gaps in implementation of these recommendations are clear. We must accelerate efforts to close these gaps.
11. A strong case can also be made for initiating an update of our commitments related to the prohibition of torture. Such an update should reflect recent torture-preventive developments, including the entry into force in 2010 of the International Convention for the Protection of all Persons from Enforced Disappearances.
12. We would like to thank the rapporteurs for their reports and we look forward to the final report of this meeting. We will give it thoughtful consideration and we hope there will be opportunities later this year to discuss it and determine further OSCE action in this important area.

Thank you.



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The Candidate Countries the FORMER YUGOSLAV REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA*, MONTENEGRO*, SERBIA and the Country of the Stabilisation and Association Process and Potential Candidate BOSNIA and HERZEGOVINA, as well as the REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA, GEORGIA, ANDORRA and SAN MARINO align themselves with this statement.

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