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OSCE HUMAN DIMENSION IMPLEMENTATION MEETING 2007

EU Statement for the Closing Reinforced Plenary Session

**Closing statement by H.E. Ambassador Ana Barata,
Permanent Representative of Portugal to the OSCE**

5th October 2007, Warsaw

Mr. Chairman, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is with great pleasure that on behalf of the European Union I address the closing reinforced plenary session of 2007 OSCE Human Dimension Implementation Meeting.

Over thirty years ago, the Helsinki Final Act set the basis for security and stability in our region. The European Union remains firmly committed to achieving this goal based on the core principles of democracy, respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, good governance and the rule of law. In this respect, increased cooperation between the various international bodies such as the OSCE, the United Nations and the Council of Europe is also paramount.

Over the past two weeks we have again witnessed lively and thought provoking discussions both in the plenary sessions and in the numerous side events. As in previous years, this has clearly demonstrated that the Human Dimension Implementation Meetings continue to play a unique role in the Helsinki process.

The European Union is committed to ensuring that the Human Dimension Implementation Meetings provide the opportunity to review the full range of OSCE commitments in the human dimension. We regret that, due to the refusal of some participating States, the

EU's proposal to have a working session exclusively dedicated to Freedom of Association and Assembly in this year's HDIM was rejected.

Free flowing discussions between representatives of Governments, international organizations and civil society have become the trademark of the annual Human Dimension Implementation Meetings. The European Union is pleased to see that, as in previous years, more than 300 NGOs were able to register freely and to engage actively in dialogue with other participants. In this respect, the European Union would like to use this opportunity to salute the Human Rights Defenders and NGO representatives who took part in this meeting and came forward to draw attention to serious human rights violations. Their dedication, sometimes at personal risk, is indeed to be applauded.

We are convinced that it is essential to maintain a free and open dialogue between NGOs and participating States of the OSCE, as established by the Helsinki 1992 document. The European Union regrets that some participating States disregarded this principle and refused to participate fully in the HDIM.

Mr. Chairman,

The EU regrets that, once again, the **Turkmenistan** delegation did not participate in the discussions. Nonetheless, The EU welcomes the recent amnesty granted to political prisoners and encourages the Turkmen authorities to honour its human dimension commitments.

The human rights situation in **Uzbekistan** is also of profound concern to the EU. We encourage the Government to honour its international commitments in terms of freedom of expression, religion and belief, to stop harassing human rights defenders and NGOs and to take effective measures to eliminate torture. The EU reiterates its concern regarding the imprisonment of Mutabar Tadjibaeva and calls for a review of her case. The EU welcomes, however, the abolition of the death penalty from the 1st January of 2008, as well as the introduction of *habeas corpus* into Uzbek law and looks forward to their implementation.

Regarding **Kazakhstan**, the EU urges the Government to follow through with the implementation of reforms, in line with OSCE commitments. We welcome the fact that **Kazakhstan** has recently signed the First and Second Optional Protocols to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture and other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, and accepted the right of individual complaint under Article 22 of this Convention. The EU looks forward to their implementation.

The EU reiterates its call on the **Belarusian** Government to honour the OSCE commitments and to cease its harassment campaign against independent civil society, NGOs and political opposition. We also deplore the authorities' continued attacks on Belarusian independent media.

Recent developments in **Russia** also give rise to concern. Over the last year, freedom of association and assembly, freedom of expression and freedom of the media have been increasingly undermined. The EU calls on the Russian authorities to honour existing OSCE commitments and principles in this respect.

Mr Chairman,

The election-related commitments undertaken by the participating States in the Copenhagen 1990 Document remain fundamental and their implementation essential to guaranteeing genuinely democratic governments. In this respect, the EU reiterates its firm support to ODIHR's autonomy and election observation methodology. We would also like to use this opportunity to urge participating States to implement ODIHR's recommendations on the improvement of their respective electoral systems.

The EU stresses the need for continued close and constructive cooperation between ODIHR and the Parliamentary Assembly.

This year's Special Days discussions on tolerance and non-discrimination, Roma and Sinti and Gender aspects of security have shown that much remains to be done in order to implement fully our OSCE commitments. The EU believes that genuine renewed political determination is needed to promote mutual respect and understanding and

combat all forms of intolerance and discrimination, to promote the social inclusion of the Roma and Sinti population and to ensure a greater gender perspective in the implementation of OSCE commitments.

Mr Chairman,

Every year Delegations are encouraged to submit ideas to be discussed in next year's human dimension events. The EU would like to suggest, inter alia, the following topics:

- Human Rights Defenders and Independent National Human Rights Institutions;
- Freedom of Association and Assembly;
- Freedom of Expression, taking into account the 10th anniversary of the creation of the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media;
- Fight against Trafficking in Human Beings, with a particular focus on the implementation of existing commitments;
- Tolerance and Non-Discrimination, including a possible exchange of good practices amongst national institutions responsible for the fight against intolerance;
- Roma and Sinti, with a special emphasis on the review of the implementation of the 2003 Action Plan;
- Freedom of religion and belief, including the relations between secular States and Islam, awareness raising and education, focussing on the current work of ODIHR and the Advisory Panel on freedom of religion and belief;
- Gender mainstreaming in all OSCE dimensions; promotion of women's rights including in countering all forms of violence against women;
- The celebration of the 60th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (10th December 2008).

Mr Chairman,

The EU is satisfied with the discussions in this year's HDIM and looks forward to a meaningful Madrid Ministerial Council that will further strengthen the Human Dimension of the OSCE. In particular, allow me to reiterate the EU's strong commitment to the approval of a Ministerial Decision on human rights defenders.

Before leaving this charming city of Warsaw, I would like to thank the Spanish Chairmanship and, in particular, the ODIHR Director, Ambassador Christian Strohal, and his staff for their excellent work which once again guaranteed the HDIM's success. Finally, allow me also to express our appreciation to our Polish hosts for their gracious hospitality.

The Candidate Countries Turkey, Croatia and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia*, the Countries of the Stabilisation and Association Process Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Montenegro, EFTA country Norway, member of the European Economic Area, as well as Ukraine align themselves with this statement.

* Croatia and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.