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EU response to the ODIHR director, Ambassador Lenarcic

The European Union warmly welcomes Ambassador Lenarcic. We appreciate his informative report on the ODIHR's activities on this year's Human Dimension Implementation Meeting and on the continued implementation by his Office of MC Decision 19/06.

The EU welcomes the fact that this year's HDIM took place in a generally constructive atmosphere. We emphasize our continued support for broad participation of civil society representatives and NGOs. Indeed, the HDIM provides a vital forum for representatives of the governments and NGOs to review participating States' implementation of their human rights commitments and raise awareness of human rights issues.

Mr Chairman, the EU supports those activities which Ambassador Lenarcic has highlighted in his report on the HDIM, such as enhancing the implementation of the Roma and Sinti Action Plan and the annual reporting on hate crimes in the OSCE region. Equally, the EU will continue to support the ODIHR's activities with regard to human rights defenders, an issue to which we attach great importance.

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During the HDIM, the EU suggested for the consideration of participating States the following topics for discussion during next year's human dimension events:

- Human rights defenders and independent national institutions for the protection of human rights;
- Prevention of torture; abolition of the death penalty;
- Respect for human rights in the fight against terrorism;
- Freedom of expression and freedom of the media;
- Rights of women and the fight against violence against women;
- The fight against hate crimes and discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation;
- and the rule of law.

Mr Chairman, the EU is fully satisfied with the way the ODIHR has implemented Ministerial Council Decision 19/06. As the EU has repeatedly pointed out, we fully support the ODIHR's election observation methodology developed following the tasking of the participating States. We commend the ODIHR for the professionalism and impartiality it has repeatedly demonstrated in this field. We reaffirm the need to preserve its autonomy.

The EU regards the ODIHR's forthcoming observation of the US Presidential Elections as a further important step towards widening the geographical coverage of its election observation activities. We welcome the ODIHR's willingness to work together with the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly in genuine partnership. We consider it essential that both the ODIHR and the OSCE PA regard this cooperation as a common - and by no means competitive - endeavour of two complementary pillars of the OSCE's election observation activities on the basis of MC Decision 19/06 and the 1997 Cooperation Agreement.

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We welcome the joint undertaking of the ODIHR and the HCNM to assess the human rights and minority situation in Georgia's war-affected areas, including South Ossetia and Abkhazia. We regret, however, that the joint ODIHR-HCNM teams and Ambassador Lenarcic were denied access to South Ossetia. We urge all parties to allow immediate safe and unhindered access to the war-affected areas for all relevant OSCE personnel.

In concluding, the EU fully endorses Ambassador Lenarcic's approach of placing our common OSCE commitments at the centre of the ODIHR's future activities. The EU would also like to thank Ambassador Lenarcic and his dedicated staff for their excellent work.

La Turquie, la Croatie* et l'ancienne République yougoslave de Macédoine*, pays candidats ; l'Albanie, la Bosnie - Herzégovine, le Monténégro et la Serbie, pays du processus de stabilisation et d'association et candidats potentiels ; l'Islande et le Liechtenstein, pays de l'Association Européenne de libre-échange et membres de l'Espace économique européen se rallient à cette déclaration.

*La Croatie et l'ancienne République yougoslave de Macédoine continuent à participer au processus de stabilisation et d'association.

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