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## EUROPEAN UNION

### OSCE High-Level Conference on Tolerance and Non-Discrimination (including human rights youth education on TND)

Tirana, 22 May 2013

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#### Closing remarks

The way ahead: consolidating progress and facing new challenges

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*As delivered by Hendrik Van de Velde, First Counsellor, Human Rights Focal Point,  
EU Delegation to the International Organisations in Vienna*

1. The European Union would like to thank the Government of Albania for its hospitality, the ODIHR for the organisation and preparation, and all the moderators, introducers and rapporteurs that have enabled this conference to elaborate recommendations.
2. Mr Chairman, we will study these recommendations in detail. We recognise that all of us can improve, benefiting from the advice of the OSCE Institutions and learn lessons from shared best practices.
3. In the meantime, the European Union would like to share the main lessons learned from this TND conference as we see them:
  - 3.1. All members of the human family have equal and inalienable rights, which they may not be deprived of on any ground. Only a human rights based approach to TND ensures comprehensiveness and inclusiveness. The EU has put some emphasis on discrimination against LGBTI persons during this conference because we see negative trends in this respect, but our fight naturally concerns every person and all distinctive traits that could be grounds for bias.
  - 3.2. Levels of intolerance and discrimination across the OSCE area remain high and continue to be a cause of concern. The on-going global economic crisis exacerbates intolerance and discrimination, for example on grounds of property and social origin, whereby the weakest and poorest people in our societies are often the first victims.
  - 3.3. Racism and xenophobia continue to be among the most resilient forms of intolerance and discrimination. Vigilance should not diminish, particularly in the wake of the social consequences of the financial crisis and the difficulties we have in coping with our increasingly diverse societies.

- 3.4. Multiple discrimination –that is: against the same individual on the basis of several distinctive traits– is an issue of great concern. We recognise that individuals subjected to multiple discrimination are some of the most vulnerable ones.
- 3.5. In promoting tolerance and non-discrimination, the indivisibility, interdependence and interrelation of human rights and OSCE human dimension commitments should be kept in mind. The implementation of commitments on tolerance and non-discrimination go hand in hand with respect for fundamental freedoms, especially freedom of religion or belief and freedom of expression. If one of them is lacking, the other one cannot be fully achieved and vice versa. On the other hand, tolerance and non-discrimination commitments cannot be used or interpreted in a way that could restrict freedom of religion or belief and all other fundamental freedoms.
- 3.6. It has become out-dated to talk about minority or majority religions. Freedom of religion or belief is threatened in different ways in different parts of the OSCE region and all religions and beliefs are concerned, often in ways that go unnoticed.
- 3.7. Education on human rights and tolerance at school, through public campaigns and with the involvement of civil society, is paramount to empower an active citizen.
- 3.8. While education and training is essential if we are to prevent or minimise incidents of intolerance and discrimination, effective investigations, legal sanctions and protection of victims are essential when harm has been done. A good legal framework is needed, but the main challenges are in effective implementation and enforcement.
- 3.9. In turn, effective implementation and enforcement depend on good, comprehensive, harmonised and reliable data collection, especially on hate crimes. The EU and its Member States endeavour to do better and, 6 years after it commenced operation, we see already the positive impact of the EU's Fundamental Rights Agency whose main mandate is such data collection

Mr Chair, these are the lessons learned that will guide the action of the European Union on the way ahead as we seek to address the challenges of intolerance and discrimination that threaten our democratic institutions and the enjoyment of human rights for all without distinction.

The Acceding Country Croatia\*, the Candidate Countries, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia\*, Montenegro\* and Serbia\*, the Countries of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidates Albania and Bosnia and Herzegovina, align themselves with this statement.

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