



Slovensko predsedstvo EU 2008  
Slovenian Presidency of the EU 2008  
La Présidence slovène de l'UE 2008

PC.DEL/92/08  
7 February 2008

ENGLISH only

## **Slovenian Presidency of the Council of the European Union**

**Permanent Council No. 700  
7 February 2008**

### **EU statement in response to the report by the Director of the ODIHR, Ambassador Christian Strohal**

The European Union warmly welcomes Ambassador Strohal back to the Permanent Council and would like to thank him for his presentation. Allow me to take this opportunity to commend you, Ambassador Strohal, and your dedicated staff for the excellent work that you are carrying out.

The EU endorses in general all of the ODIHR's proposed activities for 2008. Against the background of the ongoing budget negotiations, the EU emphasises that the ODIHR needs to be provided with sufficient financial resources to carry out its activities properly.

The EU fully supports the ODIHR's election-related activities based on the commitments entered into by the OSCE participating States. We particularly support its specific election observation methodology which has been established over many years, and which enjoys widespread international recognition, and serves as a model for, among others, EU election observation missions. We welcome the fact that the majority of OSCE participating States fully cooperate with the ODIHR before, during and after their elections, and appeal to all participating States to do so.

At the same time, we appreciate the measures taken by the ODIHR to constantly improve its election observation methodology and, in particular, to implement Ministerial Decision 19/06, as has been outlined by Ambassador Strohal on various

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occasions. The EU also appreciates the efficient and mutually reinforcing cooperation on election observation between the ODIHR and the OSCE PA on the basis of the 1997 Cooperation Agreement, as seen during a number of recent election observation missions.

The EU values the ODIHR's close cooperation with the Finnish OSCE Chairmanship, particularly in view of the priorities set out by the Chairmanship for the Human Dimension in 2008 – the fight against human trafficking, tolerance issues with a special focus on Roma and Sinti issues as well as gender mainstreaming.

The EU has designated 2008 as the Year of Intercultural Dialogue. For this reason, we look forward with special interest to the meeting of national focal points on hate crimes in June 2008. Furthermore, we hope to see a Supplementary Human Dimension Meeting in 2008 on national tolerance and non-discrimination institutions.

The EU supports the proposal by the Finnish Chairmanship to make the issue of Sustainable Policies for Roma and Sinti Integration an exclusive topic for a Supplementary Human Dimension Meeting and we welcome the attention paid by ODIHR to the status of the implementation of the Action Plan.

The EU strongly encourages the ODIHR to strengthen, including through its Focal Point, its activities in support of Human Rights Defenders and National Human Rights Institutions, topics which also merit a Ministerial Decision. We look forward to the ODIHR's input on all issues and events related to human rights this year, including the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

On democratisation, the EU strongly supports the proposal to hold a Human Dimension Seminar on the issue of constitutional justice, which would fully meet our

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wish to see respect for the rule of law being highlighted and strengthened in the OSCE participating States.

The EU considers the HDIM the most important event in the Human Dimension calendar. It presents a unique opportunity not only for participating States, but in particular also for NGOs to engage in a lively dialogue on Human Dimension issues. We strongly support the draft proposal on the organisation of this event, as tabled by the Chairman-in-Office, including the format and duration of this meeting. The EU will continue to argue for balance in the agenda of the HDIM, devoting due and equal attention to all OSCE Human Dimension commitments.

Finally, the EU would like to encourage the ODIHR to intensify its cooperation with the High Commissioner on National Minorities and the Representative on the Freedom of the Media, as well as with the three personal representatives of the Chairman-in-Office on tolerance and non-discrimination.

We wish you, Ambassador Strohal, and the whole staff of the ODIHR success in the coming months. You can count on the European Union's continued support.

The candidate countries Turkey, Croatia\* and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia\*, the countries of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidate countries Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Montenegro, the European Free Trade Association countries and members of the European Economic Area Iceland and Liechtenstein, as well as Ukraine and the Republic of Moldova align themselves with this statement.

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

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