

**EUROPEAN UNION****OSCE Human Dimension Implementation Meeting 2013
Warsaw, 30 September 2013**

**EU statement – Working Session 11
DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTIONS**

Mister Moderator,

I am honoured to speak on behalf of the European Union.

The OSCE participating States have at numerous occasions confirmed their commitment to the development of societies based on pluralistic democracy. The Copenhagen Document of 1990 underlines the importance of living up to the ideals of democracy and political pluralism as well as building democratic societies based on free and competitive elections and rule of law. These commitments have been further enriched, most notably, by the 1990 Charter of Paris and the 1999 Istanbul Convention for European Security.

In order to fully implement our common commitments, it is important to recognize the value of active participation of everyone, in democratic processes. It remains crucial to ensure freedom of expression, opinion, assembly and association - key prerequisites for democratic governance. Citizens should, furthermore, have access to different mechanisms for interaction

with government authorities, at national, regional and local levels. Also multiple discrimination should be answered in order to ensure these rights for everyone, including most vulnerable groups.

The EU strongly believes that an active and independent civil society is essential to a functioning democracy. Civil society strengthens democratic institutions and governance in a constructive and critical way. Also the judicial system should enable proper functioning of democratic institutions and civil society, in accordance with our commitments. We call on all OSCE participating States to facilitate an environment that enables and strengthens civil society's ability to give voice to citizens and hold their governments to account.

The EU is committed to advancing women's rights and their enforcement as well as the empowerment of women. We would like to stress the importance of implementing OSCE commitments on advancing women's political participation, which, inter alia, call on the participating States to consider legislative measures to facilitate a more balanced participation of women and men in political and public life, including decision-making. We also encourage all relevant OSCE structures to continue their important work in advancing the participation of women in political life.

In conclusion, we would like to express our appreciation to the important work conducted by the ODIHR and other OSCE structures supporting participating States in enhancing democratic institutions.

The Candidate Countries Turkey, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia*, Montenegro*, Iceland+ and Serbia*, the Countries of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidates Albania and Bosnia and Herzegovina, and the EFTA countries Liechtenstein and Norway, members of the European Economic Area, as well as the Republic of Moldova, Armenia, Andorra and San Marino, align themselves with this statement.

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

+ Iceland continues to be a member of the EFTA and of the European Economic Area.