



EUROPEAN UNION

OSCE Permanent Council Nr 947 Vienna, 11 April 2013

EU statement on the situation of NGOs in the Russian Federation

The European Union would like to draw the attention of the Permanent Council to the Statement of 26 March by EU High Representative Catherine Ashton on the situation of NGOs in the Russian Federation, which was circulated to all delegations on 3 April under reference number SEC.DEL/88/13.

As the High Representative stated, the EU is concerned at ongoing actions of the authorities against the NGO community in the Russian Federation, in particular by the inspections and searches launched against the Russian NGO community which seem to be aimed at further undermining civil society activities in the country.

The EU has already expressed its concerns about the legislation which now provides the basis for these raids. They have the effect of curtailing the civil freedoms of Russian population and, together with an upsurge in prosecutions of civil society activists, and other political trials, as well as lack of action in some prominent cases of human rights abuses, constitute a trend that is deeply troubling.

The EU shares the concerns about unannounced inspections of media NGOs in Russia highlighted by the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media in her press release of 9 April. We join Ms. Mijatović in calling on the authorities to end these exceptional measures and allow the NGOs to continue their essential work for the benefit of the media and the whole society.

Another cause for concern to the EU are the checks conducted against several organisations that work for closer links between the EU and the Russian Federation. We believe that any intent to portray them as “foreign agents” is not in line with the spirit of the EU-Russia partnership and our common aim to bring citizens closer.

While it is the right of Russian law enforcement authorities to conduct checks in accordance with Russian law, we would like to have clarification on the reasons for the current actions and the urgency behind the sudden and all-encompassing wave of searches on NGOs, including the scope of these inspections and the criteria used to determine which organisations should be subjected to inspection.

We are also curious that while NGOs were not informed beforehand, several media outlets were given advance notice of raids and invited to film them. This could have the effect of influencing public opinion against the work of the NGOs in question.

The European Union will continue to monitor these developments very closely and reserves the right to raise these issues at future meetings of the Permanent Council.

The Acceding Country Croatia*, the Candidate Countries the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia*, Montenegro*, and Iceland+, the Country of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidate Albania, and the EFTA country Norway, member of the European Economic Area, as well as Georgia align themselves with this statement.

* Croatia, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, and Montenegro 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.