



EUROPEAN UNION

OSCE Permanent Council Nr 919 Vienna, 5 July 2012

EU statement on the European Union Strategic Framework on Human Rights and Democracy

The Council of the European Union adopted on 25 June a Strategic Framework on Human Rights and Democracy with an Action Plan for putting it into practice. This is the first time that the European Union has had a unified Strategic Framework for this vital policy area, with such a wide-ranging plan of action for its implementation.

Human rights are one of the top priorities and a silver thread that runs through everything that we do in external relations. With this comprehensive package, we aim to enhance the effectiveness and visibility of EU human rights policy. In order to help put the Framework and the Action Plan into practice, the Council of the European Union will appoint swiftly a Special Representative on Human Rights, a newly established function.

The Framework sets out principles, objectives and priorities, all designed to improve the effectiveness and consistency of EU Human Rights policy as a whole in the next ten years. They provide an agreed basis for a truly collective effort, involving EU Member States as well as the EU Institutions. The Strategic Framework also anchors a commitment to genuine partnership with civil society.

The EU Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy covers the period until 31 December 2014 and brings together 97 actions to implement the

priorities of the Strategic Framework. Pursuant to the Strategic Framework and its Action Plan, an annual report on the assessment of its implementation will be issued. This would give an opportunity to all stakeholders in EU policy, including civil society, to assess the impact of EU action and contribute to defining future priorities.

The Strategic Framework and Action Plan aim at implementing EU priorities on human rights:

- The EU will continue to promote freedom of expression, opinion, assembly and association, both on-line and offline. Democracy cannot exist without these rights. It will promote freedom of religion or belief and fight discrimination in all its forms through combating discrimination on grounds of race, ethnicity, age, gender or sexual orientation and by advocating for the rights of children, persons belonging to minorities, indigenous peoples, refugees, migrants and persons with disabilities.
- The EU will continue to campaign for the rights and empowerment of women in all contexts through fighting discriminatory legislation, gender-based violence and marginalisation.
- The EU will intensify its efforts to promote economic, social and cultural rights; the EU will strengthen its efforts to ensure universal and non-discriminatory access to basic services, with a particular focus on poor and vulnerable groups. The EU will encourage and contribute to implementation of the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights.
- Encouraged by the growing momentum towards abolition of the death penalty worldwide, the EU will continue its long-standing campaign against the death penalty. The EU will continue to

campaign vigorously against torture and cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment.

- The fair and impartial administration of justice is essential to safeguard human rights. The EU will step up its efforts to promote the right to a fair trial and equality before the law. The EU will continue to promote observance of international humanitarian law; it will fight vigorously against impunity for serious crimes of concern to the international community, including sexual violence committed in connection with armed conflict, not least through its commitment to the International Criminal Court.
- Courageous individuals fighting for human rights worldwide frequently find themselves the target of oppression and coercion; the EU will intensify its political and financial support for human rights defenders and step up its efforts against all forms of reprisals.

In the specific context of the OSCE, we will continue to address the EU priorities which are of most relevance in the comprehensive concept of security.

Finally, Mr Chairman, the EU remains committed to a strong multilateral human rights system, which can monitor impartially the implementation of human rights norms in all States. The OSCE is part of this human rights system. This is why the European Union will continue to attach particular importance to the crucial work of the OSCE human dimension in following-up the implementation of all commitments.

The Acceding Country Croatia*, the Candidate Countries 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, as well as Ukraine, Armenia and Georgia, 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.

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