



EUROPEAN UNION

OSCE Human Dimension Implementation Meeting 2012 Warsaw, 24 September 2012

EU statement – Opening session

DELIVERED BY MR. STAVROS LAMBRINIDIS
EUROPEAN UNION SPECIAL REPRESENTATIVE FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

Mr. Chairman, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is my honour to speak on behalf of the European Union at this opening session of the 2012 OSCE Human Dimension Implementation Meeting.

At the outset, the EU would like to express its thanks and appreciation to the Irish Chairmanship-in-Office for its able leadership of the OSCE this year. Our gratitude goes also to the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights and its Director, Ambassador Janez Lenarčič, for the excellent preparation of this meeting as well as their continued efforts to promote human rights and democratic values in the OSCE area by assisting participating States in implementing their commitments.

Before I proceed with my statement, Mr. Chairman, allow me to introduce myself, as this is one of my very first international meetings since taking up my duties as the first European Union Special Representative for Human Rights. This institution, the first thematic EU Special Representative dossier, was created pursuant to the European Union Strategic Framework and Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy, adopted in June this year. The primary task of the broad, flexible mandate given to me by the Council of the European Union is to ensure a more effective protection and promotion of human rights and democracy in EU external action. This derives from our firm conviction that there cannot be lasting security and stability without respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms.

Mr. Chairman,

The participating States of the OSCE have repeatedly affirmed, most recently at the Astana Summit, *that the commitments undertaken in the field of the human dimension*

are matters of direct and legitimate concern to all participating States and do not belong exclusively to the internal affairs of the State concerned. This is the basis for the systematic and thorough assessment of the implementation of human dimension commitments, at the core of which lies the HDIM. The EU reiterates its support to the HDIM as the main instrument for the effective monitoring of compliance with human dimension commitments, including through the identification of existing gaps and the exchange of best practices.

In this context, the EU greatly values our exchanges during the HDIM and attributes great importance to the recommendations stemming from the Meeting, particularly those offered by the OSCE autonomous institutions. We are convinced that compliance with human dimension commitments across the OSCE space could be significantly improved and that HDIM recommendations, including proper follow-up thereof, are an important tool towards enhancing compliance. We wish to remind that strengthening the implementation of human dimension commitments is a top priority for the European Union in the OSCE.

The EU is committed to promoting respect for human rights, at home and abroad. In this context, the EU adopted in June this year a Strategic Framework and Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy, with the aim to mainstream human rights, democracy and the rule of law into all EU policies and adopt concrete actions to this end. The above strategy also confirms that we consider organizations such as the OSCE and the Council of Europe as indispensable partners in the promotion of human rights, striving for continued good co-operation and synergies with them.

In the OSCE context, we will continue to focus mainly on human rights and fundamental freedoms, with particular attention to the freedom of the media, including the safety of journalists, freedom of assembly and association, freedom of religion, belief and conscience as well as human rights defenders, fair trial, free and fair elections, and the fight against torture and other forms of inhuman or degrading treatment. The importance of free and fair elections is once again highlighted by the elections taking place in a number of OSCE participating States this year. We would like to reiterate our support for the ODIHR's election observation methodology and its role in helping all of us implement our election-related commitments, including through follow-up of its recommendations.

As regards freedom of expression and freedom of the media, we especially value the in-depth discussions at the Dublin Conference on Internet Freedom, held in June, and we look forward to the November Supplementary Human Dimension Meeting on Freedom of Assembly and Association. We will continue to voice our staunch opposition to the death penalty and call for its abolition. At the same time, we condemn all forms and manifestations of discrimination and intolerance, be it on grounds of race, ethnicity, religion, belief, age, disability, gender, sexual orientation or against LGBT persons.

The EU values the unique involvement of civil society in OSCE human dimension events as well as the recommendations of its representatives. The input of non-governmental organisations and human rights activists working on the ground, sometimes under very challenging circumstances, provides vital insight and helps identify gaps. The EU acknowledges the role of NGOs in the monitoring of the implementation of human dimension commitments. We believe that their participation can make governments more accountable for their actions or omissions in the area of human rights protection.

As in previous years, the European Union will make specific comments and recommendations in the working sessions of the Meeting, paying particular attention to the review of implementation of commitments relating to fundamental freedoms, as the basic tenets of genuinely democratic societies. We look forward to a constructive exchange of views during the next two weeks and we hope to see the outcome of this Meeting serve as a basis for draft decisions at the Dublin Ministerial Council.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman

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, and the EFTA country Liechtenstein, member of the European Economic Area, as well as the Republic of Moldova, Georgia, Andorra and San Marino, 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.