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Swedish Presidency of the European Union

Human Dimension Implementation Meeting
Warsaw, 2 October 2009

EU Statement, Working Session 8-9: Human Rights Education

Mr/Ms Moderator, Ladies and Gentlemen,

The EU is committed to the promotion of human rights education at the global, regional and local levels and believes that the OSCE is an invaluable actor in this area. The EU therefore welcomes due attention given to this topic on the agenda of the Human Dimension Implementation Meeting in the year when we are observing the 20th anniversary of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and during the UN International Year of Human Rights Learning.

The OSCE commitments in the field of human rights education are numerous and comprehensive. The participating States have recognized that the promotion of human rights through education and training may be viewed in the context of the OSCE's comprehensive concept of security and is vital for the strengthening of the respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms as well as for promoting tolerance and non-discrimination.

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The EU strongly believes in these commitments and it therefore fully supports and appreciates the ODIHR's activities in this field, such as training for governments and civil society, human-rights training for OSCE field staff, legal training, and education for the promotion of mutual respect and understanding, including education on the holocaust and anti-Semitism. The EU would especially like to commend the ODIHR on a new publication *“Human Rights Education in the School Systems of Europe, Central Asia and North America: A Compendium of Good Practice.”* Initiated in 2005 and developed in cooperation with the CoE, UNESCO and UNOHCHR, the compendium includes best practices in enhancing the promotion of human rights education and training in 38 countries. It encompasses the promotion of tolerance and non-discrimination, conflict prevention and reconciliation, as well as many other issues. We believe that it will definitely serve as a useful reference for participating States in the future.

On this occasion, the EU would again like to highlight the crucial role of the OSCE institutions and field missions in bringing together governments and civil society on human rights education and training. As stipulated in the 2005 Ljubljana Ministerial Decision, only in cooperation with the civil society will we be able to make human rights a reality for each person in every community and in society at large. Since the civil society, be it individuals or organizations, has a crucial role in promoting human rights before a broader audience in our countries, the EU encourages all OSCE participating States to implement their commitments in this regard. We all have recognized that it is essential for our citizens, especially the young generation, to be educated on human rights and fundamental freedoms. Knowing and respecting human rights,

including the rights of women and children, can make a huge difference in each and every society.

Due to its importance, the promotion of human rights education and training is on the agenda of various global and regional organizations. In this regard, the EU welcomes the existing cooperation with the OSCE, the CoE and the UN, and between them. The EU encourages all international organisations to further enhance and strengthen their consultation, cooperation and coordination in this field.

Sixty years after its creation, enlarged to 47 member countries and in a completely changed political and economic environment, the CoE is facing new major challenges for the defence of human rights and democratic ideals of Europe.

In a context of global economic recession and post-conflict situations in several regions of Europe, the common values of the protection of human rights and the rule of law seem to be at risk. Nevertheless, the CoE should continue to focus on consolidation and promotion of democracy, human rights and the rule of law. Human rights education, including civic education, peace education and intercultural education remain a key objective.

The CoE has set a number of valuable practices and activities under a common name Education for Democratic Citizenship and Human Rights with a view to raising awareness of shared fundamental values and thus build and strengthen democratic societies. The main feature is its multi-dimensional, lifelong aspect, as it is

designed for all age groups and social classes, with a particular focus on educational community, decision-makers and NGOs.

During the Slovenian Chairmanship of the Committee of Ministers of the CoE, a human rights educational project with a multi-culturally universal tool “Our rights” for a whole generation of 11–12-year old children is presently being launched in Kosovo¹ and North Ossetia – Alanya in the Russian Federation, as well as for children of all three main ethnical groups in Bosnia an Herzegovina. The objective of this activity is to meet the needs of empowerment of children in these environments.

Human rights education may be implemented in many different ways within the formal education or concurrently. It should always be tailor-made to correspond to different educational cultures and systems. In this context, the EU would like to express its commitment to the UN Plan of Action of the 2005 World Program of Human Rights Education. The Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) in Geneva, which is responsible for coordinating the World Programme, consulted with various stakeholders on the possible focus, in terms of target sector or thematic area, of the second phase of the World Programme, which begins on 1 January 2010.

The EU welcomes the endeavours to promote human rights education by the UN Human Rights Council. In March 2009, Human Rights Council adopted Resolution 10/28 tabled by the cross-regional Platform for Human Rights Education and Training, in

¹ All references to Kosovo herein, whether the territory, institutions or population, are to be understood in full compliance with UN Security Council Resolution 1244, and without prejudice to the status of Kosovo.

which it tasked the Advisory Committee with delivering a draft UN Declaration on Human Rights Education and Training to be discussed at the March session in 2010. The overwhelming amount of responses to the questionnaire drawn up by the Advisory Committee reflected the great interest which human rights education and training generates among all UN stakeholders. In addition, the seminar on the draft Declaration held in Marrakech on 16–17 July 2009 was a fruitful forum for discussion and provided useful input for the work of the Advisory Committee. It is truly an issue which cuts across boundaries and sectors and affects all people; thus, the EU feels it is the right time to develop such a Declaration.

Within the European Initiative for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR), the EU's activities complement our common OSCE endeavours. A series of education and training projects is envisaged with three main objectives in mind: the empowerment of citizens to take action in defence of their human rights; the enhancement of the capacity of public officials to protect human rights; and the development of networks of expertise in human rights and democracy. These activities have a high impact due to the multiplier initiatives involving NGOs, schools and universities, which have long-term effect on the development of society.

The EU has been instrumental in the creation and support of five regional Master Degrees in Human Rights and Democratisation. The European Master's Programme in Human Rights and Democratisation (EMA), implemented by the European Inter-University Centre, is a high-level programme of cooperation involving 41 prestigious universities from all 27 EU Member States. Since its inception in 1997, the EMA programme has conferred the European Master's degree on almost 900 students. Most of these

alumni are currently employed in the area of human rights, mostly in international organisations but also in national authorities, NGOs and civil society organisations.

It has furthermore given inspiration to the creation of similar EU-funded inter-university networks and education programmes in human rights and democracy in other regions of the world, notably the African Master based in Pretoria, the regional Master for South-East Europe in Sarajevo, the Asia-Pacific Master and the Latin American Master.

The right to be aware of human rights of oneself and of others is the basis for real respect and promotion of human rights. The EU therefore considers our common endeavours towards human rights education as an indispensable tool for human development.

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

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