



EUROPEAN UNION
OSCE Supplementary Human Dimension Meeting
Freedom of Peaceful Assembly and Association
Vienna, 16-17 April 2015

EU Concluding Statement

1. This Supplementary Human Dimension Meeting (SHDM) has been an invaluable and timely opportunity to discuss freedoms that play an important role in bolstering democratic legitimacy and facilitating the promotion and protection of many fundamental freedoms and human rights. The European Union commends the Chairmanship for having selected such a relevant issue as the topic for this SHDM. We thank both the Chairmanship and ODIHR for their work in organising the event, as well as the speakers and moderators, whose valuable contributions have helped shape our discussions.
2. We also particularly appreciate the active contribution that civil society has made to this meeting. They are after all at the forefront of those that suffer when the freedoms of assembly and association are repressed, and the beneficiaries when these freedoms are facilitated.
3. Unfortunately, we have heard numerous examples at this meeting of the serious obstacles that civil society is experiencing in the face of restrictive legislation and policies. The prevalence of such obstacles underlines the need for improved implementation by participating States of their OSCE human dimension commitments. ODIHR continues to play a valuable role in assisting participating States in such endeavours. We wish to take this opportunity to reiterate our continued appreciation for the excellent work ODIHR is undertaking in relation to these two freedoms, including the guidelines they have prepared together with the Venice Commission, first on freedom of peaceful assembly and most recently on freedom of association. We also take this opportunity to once again highlight our support for the guidelines on the protection of human rights defenders.
4. Whilst the first response to the challenges and shortcomings outlined at this meeting must come from the concerned states individually, it is also important that we continue to respond collectively. We hope that the Chairmanship will facilitate a strengthened OSCE response to the issues raised at this meeting by maintaining a focus on these freedoms in the run-up to the Belgrade Ministerial Council. In that context, we recall the broad support amongst participating States for the draft Ministerial Council Decision on Freedom of Peaceful Assembly and Association tabled ahead of last year's meeting in Basel, which we hope will attract further support and soon find consensus.

The Candidate Countries the FORMER YUGOSLAV REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA*, MONTENEGRO*, and ALBANIA*, the Country of the Stabilisation and Association Process and Potential Candidate BOSNIA and HERZEGOVINA, and the EFTA country LIECHTENSTEIN, members of the European Economic Area, as well as UKRAINE, the REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA, GEORGIA, and SAN MARINO align themselves with this statement.

* The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro, and Albania continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.