

OSCE HUMAN DIMENSION IMPLEMENTATION MEETING 2006

EU statement for the Closing Reinforced Plenary Session

13 October, Warsaw

The European Union is committed to ensuring prosperity, security and stability in partnership with its neighbours based on shared commitments and common values. This is the basis of our co-operation with all participating states.

The EU's approach is one of effective multilateralism. Strong co-operation with the OSCE and other international organisations such as the Council of Europe and the United Nations is vital to achieving our security objectives including compliance with Human Dimension commitments.

Lasting prosperity, security and stability cannot be achieved without democracy, good governance, respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, the rule of law, and tolerance and non-discrimination. They are also prerequisites for sustainable progress within societies and friendly relations between countries.

The human dimension is therefore vital to the OSCE. It has developed the unique, irreplaceable institutions of ODIHR, the Representative on Freedom of the Media and the High Commissioner on National Minorities. In strengthening the effectiveness of the OSCE the excellent work carried out in this area must be safeguarded and furthered.

Mr Chairman

Presentations and discussions at this meeting and in the side-events over the past two weeks have confirmed that the Human Dimension Implementation Meeting is an essential element of the activities of the OSCE.

The European Union would like to express its appreciation to the members of over 300 Non Governmental Organisations who took part in this meeting. Their work, often in difficult circumstances, in defending democracy, human rights and fundamental freedoms, makes a vital contribution. NGO participation at the HDIM is a unique strength of the OSCE.

The EU is pleased with the increasingly interactive character of discussions between governments and civil society at the HDIM. They have engaged in a dialogue on important issues, and governmental delegations have listened and some have replied to concerns expressed by NGOs. We regret that officials of Turkmenistan have not been present to listen to the many concerns expressed by NGO representatives.

The European Union recalls that it has repeatedly expressed its grave concern about the human rights situation in Turkmenistan and repressive measures taken against civil society organisations and persons belonging to minorities. Freedom of expression and access to justice have recently suffered

additional serious setbacks. The European Union calls upon Turkmenistan to respect its obligations under OSCE commitments and the right to a fair trial. The EU has expressed its deep concern over the death in custody of the journalist Ms. Ogulsapar Muradova and has called for an independent investigation of its cause.

We remain profoundly concerned about noncompliance with OSCE principles and commitments by the authorities of Uzbekistan. The EU reiterates its call for an international, independent inquiry into the Andijan events. In the aftermath of the Andijan incident large numbers of human rights defenders and journalists and local residents have been harassed or detained. Given the widespread practice of torture in Uzbekistan, the recent refoulement of Uzbek refugees by Kyrgyzstan and Ukraine raises concerns about their treatment in custody. The EU urges Uzbekistan to establish a moratorium on executions with a view to completely abolishing the death penalty, which should be the aim of all participating States.

The European Union notes with regret that the Belarusian authorities continue to harass civil society activists and to demonstrate unwillingness to respect OSCE standards in democracy and human rights. The March 2006 Presidential elections were fundamentally flawed. Opposition candidates did not have fair access to media and were imprisoned or detained on dubious grounds. The EU is committed to continue furthering contacts with civil society organisations in Belarus.

The European Union is concerned about attacks against human rights defenders. We learned with deep regret about the killing of Ms. Anna Politkovskaya, whose life's work as a journalist and human rights defender we greatly value. We call on the Russian authorities to do everything in their power to protect journalists and human rights defenders.

Mr Chairman

Free and fair elections are fundamental for democracy. The OSCE participating States have freely entered into a number of election related commitments. The good conduct of democratic elections can only be established and maintained through genuine political determination to uphold OSCE principles, values and commitments. ODIHR has developed election observation methodology which is widely regarded as impartial, objective and effective. It is held in high esteem by other international organisations.

The EU regrets that OSCE/ODIHR recommendations to improve national electoral processes have not been fully implemented in a number of participating States. The EU fully supports efforts by the Chairman-in-Office and ODIHR to ensure better follow-up to the recommendations of OSCE/ODIHR election observation missions, and their implementation.

The Ljubljana Ministerial Council tasked ODIHR to submit, for discussion to the next Ministerial Council, a report on four aspects of strengthening the effectiveness of the OSCE in the human dimension. The EU thanks ODIHR for its interaction with participating States in the course of this year and looks forward to presentation of ODIHR's report to Ministers.

The EU emphasises the importance of a gender perspective in all OSCE activities and the implementation of OSCE commitments. Without the active involvement of women, participating States would not be able to fulfill their commitments to democracy, human rights and rule of law.

The EU also encourages continuation of work on rule of law and on criminal justice system. The EU supports the adoption of a ministerial decision on human rights defenders.

The Ljubljana Ministerial Council endorsed an additional commitment to address the special needs of child victims of trafficking. The EU supports the proposal of the Belgian Chairmanship, co-sponsored by France and the United States, to adopt a ministerial decision on combating the sexual exploitation of children. The OSCE has an important role in combating all forms of human trafficking. The EU looks forward to the appointment of a new Special Representative on Combating Trafficking in Human Beings.

The fight against intolerance and discrimination in the OSCE area must remain high on our agenda. Therefore, we welcome the proposal by Romania to host a high-level conference on combating discrimination and promoting mutual respect and understanding in 2007, as follow-up to the OSCE Cordoba Conference on combating anti-Semitism and other forms of intolerance. We also find promising the idea of the incoming Spanish Chairmanship to have diversity and participation in pluralistic societies as an overarching theme for next years human dimension activities.

Mr Chairman

Every year delegations are encouraged to submit ideas for the following year's human dimension activities. The EU would like to suggest the following topics inter alia to be discussed in human dimension events next year:

- political parties and civil society
- human rights defenders and national human rights institutions
- freedom of assembly, association and expression
- promotion of tolerance and non-discrimination
- combating racism and xenophobia
- women's political participation reinforcing democracy
- combating trafficking in children.

The EU expresses its appreciation to the Belgian Chairmanship and ODIHR for their efforts in taking forward activities in the human dimension in 2006. We look forward to a successful Ministerial Meeting in Brussels in December.

The EU would like to thank the ODIHR Director, Ambassador Christian Strohal, and his dedicated staff for their excellent work that has made this meeting a success. We would also like to thank our Polish hosts for the gracious hospitality extended to participants.

The Acceding Countries Bulgaria and Romania, the Candidate Countries Turkey and Croatia,¹ the Countries of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidates Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, and Serbia, EFTA country Norway, member of the European Economic Area, as well as the Republic of Moldova align themselves with this statement.

¹ Croatia and the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process