



EUROPEAN UNION

Human Dimension Implementation Meeting Warsaw, 26 September 2011

EU Opening Statement

Mr Chairperson, Excellences, Ladies and Gentlemen

I am privileged to speak on behalf of the European Union at this opening session of the 2011 OSCE Human Dimension Implementation Meeting. At the outset let me express the EU's appreciation for the Lithuanian OSCE Chairmanship for its strong and effective 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 usual excellent preparation of the meeting and continued tireless efforts to promote human rights and democratic values.

Mr Chairperson,

Last year in Astana, heads of the OSCE participating States reaffirmed categorically and irrevocably 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. These words in a clear and unambiguous way recommit participating States to a dynamic, extensive, well-structured and inspiring assessment of the state of implementation of human dimension commitments in the OSCE area. The EU considers HDIM a central instrument for monitoring compliance with the human dimension obligations undertaken in the framework of the OSCE, a

proper tool allowing for identification of existing gaps and shortcomings in this field as well as for putting forward new ideas aimed at improving the human rights record of the participating States. In this regard, the EU is a champion of better use of recommendations offered by the OSCE institutions and made during the human dimension events, follow-up to which requires further enhancement. The EU encourages participating States to intensify their efforts in this direction and to fully co-operate with the OSCE institutions and field presences. We support also close collaboration between the OSCE, and other international organizations sharing same attachment to promoting human rights and democratic values, including the EU and the Council of Europe.

Let me underline that for the European Union respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms is a prerequisite to secure true and lasting peace and stability both within states and in the relations between them. Again, as we declared in Astana, the OSCE comprehensive concept of security relates the maintenance of peace to the respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms.

For these reasons, the EU voices its concerns whenever human rights and fundamental freedoms are violated, including cases of intimidation of human rights defenders and journalists, violation of freedom of press and assembly, trampling on the right to fair trial or breaching commitments concerning free and fair elections. We strongly condemn such practices and deeply regret that since the Astana Summit we have witnessed dramatic accumulation of disrespect for human rights in Belarus. Furthermore, we are apprehensive about persistent and even increasing discrimination and intolerance originating from ethnic, social and religious prejudice, as well as those based on sexual orientation and gender identity. We reiterate our firm disapproval and opposition to the practice continued by the few participating States of pronouncing and carrying out death sentences.

The EU values HDIM due to its unique character and features. The participation of representatives of non-governmental organizations and human rights activists makes this meeting a vital and one-of-a-kind forum for an open and frank dialogue between authorities and civil society, allowing for a genuine scrutiny of governments' compliance with human rights obligations.

As in previous years, the European Union will make in the course of the conference specific comments and recommendations addressing issues brought up during individual working sessions. Without prejudice to the other topics, the EU will pay particular attention to the review of implementation of fundamental freedoms, which are among the basic prerequisites for truly democratic societies and to the pursuit of tolerance and mutual understanding in society. The EU commends the Lithuanian Chairmanship and ODIHR for organizing earlier this year important events dedicated to the safety of journalists, to the promotion of pluralism in the new media and to National Human Rights Institutions. These events provided an excellent platform for the exchange of views, experiences and best practices and their outcomes can serve as a basis for adopting relevant OSCE decisions at the upcoming Ministerial Council in Vilnius.

Finally, let me reiterate the EU's full support for the activity of the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights and strong confidence in its role in assisting participating States in implementation of their OSCE human dimension commitments.

Thank you for your kind attention.

The candidate countries CROATIA*, the FORMER YUGOSLAV REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA*, MONTENEGRO* and ICELAND**, the country of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidate country ALBANIA, the European Free Trade Association country LIECHTENSTEIN, member of the European Economic Area, as well as the REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA, ANDORRA and SAN MARINO align themselves with this statement.

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

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