



EUROPEAN UNION

**Human Dimension Implementation Meeting
Warsaw, 7 October 2011**

EU Statement at the Closing Session

Mr Chairperson, Excellences, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am privileged to speak on behalf of the European Union at this closing session of the 2011 OSCE Human Dimension Implementation Meeting.

The Arab spring carries with it raising expectation of fulfilment of fundamental freedoms and human rights, which should make us all intensify our work in this regard. The EU reiterates its attachment to the fulfilment of the commitments undertaken within the OSCE Human Dimension. The annual HDIM is an important and useful platform, it helps us to review the implementation of our common commitments, to reflect on lessons learned and to identify best responses to the new challenges in the human dimension.

After two weeks of intensive deliberations, no one should have any doubts that those challenges remain numerous. Let me name just a few of them: the lack of media freedom in some participating States continues to be alarming; human rights defenders still face harassment and intimidation; certain OSCE participating States continue to violate freedom of assembly and association; a number of cases of torture and cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment and punishment have been reported; two participating States maintain the death penalty in their penal codes and carry out this cruel and undignified punishment; elections are not always free, fair and transparent; we must do better in promoting gender equality and the empowerment of women; there is a lack of improvement in the situation of Roma and Sinti; the same may be observed with

respect to different forms of intolerance and discrimination, which persist across the OSCE area.

The EU wishes to commend the Lithuanian Chairmanship on their efforts to address some of the aforementioned worrying and persistent trends by tabling concrete proposals for the upcoming Vilnius Ministerial Meeting. The various proposals and recommendations made by the EU during individual working sessions also aimed at improving the situation in the areas where we all can, and must, do better.

In the course of the last two weeks we have witnessed long and lively debates, both during plenary sessions, as well as during various side events devoted to exploring in greater depth issues of particular interest and crucial importance. They all had one common feature - the dedicated involvement of civil society. The EU highly appreciates the commitment and enthusiasm of the non-governmental organisations, their presence allows for thorough examination of the human rights record of participating States and a vigorous exchange of views. In this context, the EU would like to restate its firm position on the importance of the open and free participation of representatives of non-governmental organisations in OSCE Human Dimension events. The number and quality of the interventions made by the representatives of civil society, and the number of side events organised with their involvement, bear testimony to the important role they play in our efforts to promote democracy and human rights across the OSCE space.

It should be underlined that NGOs touched upon various topical issues, pointing out abuses and shortcomings in a number of OSCE participating States. We encourage States that have been the subject of criticism to make good use of the recommendations and follow-up accordingly. Our discussions, despite having undeniable values in themselves, need to be followed with genuine efforts by the participating States to act upon recommendations and to take advantage of the expertise offered by the OSCE institutions and field missions. Ultimately we need to take concrete, systematic steps directed towards better implementation of our common commitments.

Mr Chairperson

The EU reiterates its condemnation of the human rights violations in Belarus, to which we referred in our opening statement and elsewhere, and urges the authorities in Minsk to release and rehabilitate unconditionally all political prisoners and to stop harassment of the opposition, independent journalists and human rights defenders. The EU also remains worried by cases of human rights infringements in certain participating States of Central Asia.

In this context, we express our regret that the delegation of Turkmenistan decided not to participate in the meeting, thus missing a valuable opportunity for an open and frank dialogue with other participating States and civil society.

In relation to the coming discussions in Vienna on the possible reform of Human Dimension events, the EU encourages participating States to take stock of this year's HDIM and think about ways of further strengthening the effectiveness of the meeting and its follow-up. The intended purpose of HDIM is the review of the level of implementation of all human dimension commitments by each and every participating State. We should make sure that the modalities of the event continue to allow us to achieve this goal.

Mr Chairperson,

As in previous years the EU wishes to make suggestions regarding next year's human dimension events. In 2012 the EU would like the OSCE to focus on the following issues in particular:

- Media freedom and freedom of expression as basic requisites for civil liberties and a fundamental component of a democratic society;
- Freedom of assembly and association;
- Human rights defenders;
- Rule of law, in particular the right to a fair trial;

- Prevention of torture and cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, abolition of the death penalty;
- Democratic character of the political process, and
- improving the situation of Roma and Sinti.

In conclusion, the EU wishes to thank Ambassador Janez Lenarčič and his team for the excellent preparation of HDIM, and all those who contributed to the effective conduct of the meeting, including moderators, key-note speakers, rapporteurs and interpreters. We praise the Office's twenty years of competent and passionate engagement in the promotion of human rights and democratic values.

We also thank representatives of non-governmental organisations and human rights defenders for their active participation in the meeting and their invaluable contribution to our discussions.

Thank you for your kind attention.

The candidate countries CROATIA*, the FORMER YUGOSLAV REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA*, MONTENEGRO* and ICELAND**, the countries of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidate countries ALBANIA and SERBIA, the European Free Trade Association countries LIECHTENSTEIN and NORWAY, members 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.