



EUROPEAN UNION

**OSCE Permanent Council Nr 873
Vienna, 7 July 2011**

EU statement on the occasion of the United Nations International Day in Support of Victims of Torture

The EU utterly condemns torture. In this connection, we would like to draw the attention of the Permanent Council to the declaration by the EU High Representative on behalf of the European Union on the occasion of the United Nations International Day in Support of Victims of Torture issued on 26 June. In the declaration, the EU resolves to intensify its efforts to secure a world free from torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.

At the OSCE Ministerial Council meeting in Athens in 2009 we all reaffirmed our OSCE commitments to eradicate torture, which includes the duty to ensure inquiry into all alleged cases of torture and ill-treatment. It is universally agreed that torture cannot be excused or defended under any circumstances. Regrettably, in violation of all these commitments, cases of both physical and psychological torture are not uncommon in the OSCE region.

The EU believes that many OSCE participating States need to perform better to do away with torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.

The EU calls on OSCE participating States to take a holistic approach to combat this phenomenon, which would require relevant legislation, policy decisions,

training and capacity building and a clear message from the highest level of government that acts of torture will not be tolerated or go unpunished.

The absolute abolition of torture is an EU priority, also in the framework of the OSCE. Therefore, we regret that issues such as accountability of perpetrators and rehabilitation of victims of torture are rarely included on the OSCE's agenda.

The EU commends the efforts of ODIHR and OSCE field operations in assisting participating States in combating torture. Of particular importance are activities concerning training and awareness raising, monitoring of detention facilities and supporting the establishment and functioning of National Preventive Mechanisms under the Optional Protocol to the UN Convention Against Torture (OP-CAT). Given the violations occurring across the OSCE region, we would like these efforts intensified.

The Ministerial Declaration from Athens calls on all participating States that have not yet done so to give early consideration to becoming parties to Optional Protocol to the UN Convention Against Torture. The EU urges all participating States to designate or establish truly independent and effective National Preventive Mechanisms as quickly as possible. We also urge countries to recognise the competence of the Committee against Torture to receive and consider individual communications.

Finally, the EU pays tribute to the persistent and often heroic efforts of so many NGOs and individuals working to prevent torture, and to lessen the suffering of its victims.

The candidate countries TURKEY, CROATIA*, the FORMER YUGOSLAV REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA*, MONTENEGRO* and ICELAND**, the countries of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidate countries ALBANIA, BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA and SERBIA, the European Free Trade Association countries LIECHTENSTEIN and NORWAY, members of the European Economic Area, as well as UKRAINE, the REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA, ARMENIA, GEORGIA and ANDORRA 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.