



## **EUROPEAN UNION**

### **OSCE Permanent Council Nr 908 Vienna, 19 April 2012**

#### **EU Statement in reply to H.E. Ambassador-at-large Konstantin Dolgov, Commissioner on Human Rights, Democracy and the Rule of Law of the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs**

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The European Union welcomes Commissioner Dolgov at the OSCE Permanent Council and thanks him for his presentation of his work as Commissioner on Human Rights, Democracy and the Rule of Law of the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Human Rights, Democracy and the Rule of Law lie at the core of the EU's foreign and security policy and of the OSCE concept of comprehensive security. We seek to promote and protect these principles in a comprehensive manner in our bilateral relations as well as in multilateral forums. In the OSCE all participating States are committed to ensure full implementation of their OSCE commitments, including those of the Human Dimension. We find the most pressing needs in areas such as freedom of the media, including fundamental freedoms in the digital age as well as safety of journalists, and freedom of assembly and association, including ensuring the respect for the rights of human rights defenders.

The European Union is ready to engage in a discussion on how to strengthen the review of implementation of our Human Dimension commitments in a way which retains the full engagement of NGOs, and we look forward to advancing this in

2012.

The EU highly values the work of the Office of Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR), the Representative on Freedom of the Media and the High Commissioner on National Minorities. The EU expresses its strong support to these institutions and their autonomy. We reiterate our full support for the ODIHR's election observation methodology and the need to implement election related commitments. In this context, we urge the Russian Federation to consider carefully the findings and recommendations of the OSCE Election Observation Missions concerning the recent Parliamentary and Presidential elections in Russia.

We very much appreciate the fact that the Russian Federation, in its Report on the situation of Human Rights in certain States, referred widely to reports originating from international NGOs and from international human rights bodies. We encourage the Russian Federation to approach such contributions in an equally open way when it comes to assessing the human rights situation in Russia, and in the extension of protection of human rights defenders and journalists.

Indeed, we have on several occasions felt compelled to raise issues of violence against journalists in Russia, including in northern Caucasus. We hope soon to see further concrete results in investigations of such cases of violence.

Furthermore, the European Union remains concerned by manifestations of intolerance and discrimination, including against LGBT individuals in Russia. In this regard, the recent laws adopted by the local Parliament of St. Petersburg and elsewhere, equating homosexuality to paedophilia, constitute an infringement of human rights and discriminates LGBT people by stigmatising them and restricting their freedom of expression and freedom of assembly and association.

Commissioner Dolgov raised some issues on the human rights situation within the European Union. Many of these issues are also discussed in the EU-Russia human rights consultations, in an open and frank manner. Let us recall that the EU and Russia have so far had 14 rounds of these consultations. We take this opportunity to call on Russia to make these consultations more meaningful and to agree to change their modalities so as to allow them to better deal with our respective concerns.

We also wish to underline that many issues of shared concern, such as the situation of Roma and Sinti, racism and discrimination, and the rights of the child have been on the agenda of recent EU-Russia consultations on human rights.

Finally, Mr Chairman, we thank again Commissioner Dolgov for his presentation today and wish him all the best in his endeavours.

The Acceding Country Croatia\*, the Candidate Countries the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia\*, Montenegro\*, Iceland+ and Serbia\*, the Countries of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidates Albania and Bosnia and Herzegovina, and the EFTA country Norway, member of the European Economic Area, align themselves with this statement.

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

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