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EU statement in response to the report by the ODIHR Director, Ambassador Lenarčič

The EU warmly welcomes Ambassador Lenarčič back to the PC and thanks him for his informative report on the recent HDIM as well as on the ODIHR's other activities.

We would like to reiterate our full support for the work carried out by Ambassador Lenarčič and his staff, which is professional, effective, transparent and fully in line with the mandate given to the ODIHR by the participating States, namely to assist them in their efforts to implement fully our common OSCE commitments.

In particular, we would like to congratulate Ambassador Lenarčič and his staff for successfully organizing this year's HDIM. We welcome the intensive and lively debates that took place on the whole OSCE Human Dimension spectrum. We especially note the high level of interest awarded to the working sessions on Human rights and fundamental freedoms as well as tolerance and hate crimes.

Postal address
Obere Donaustrasse 49-51
1020 Vienna, Austria

Visitor's address
Obere Donaustrasse 49-51
1020 Vienna, Austria

Telephone
+43 (0) 1 217 53 0

Fax
+43 (0) 1 217 53 380

E-mail: osse-del.wien@foreign.ministry.se
euoffice@osce.org

To a large degree, this was due to very intensive NGO contributions. In this regard, we would like to reiterate our full support for a broad participation of NGOs and Civil Society in the HDIM and other Human Dimension events on the basis of our common OSCE commitments and refer to our statement made two weeks ago in the PC on 15 October.

For the future of the HDIM, we might also discuss how to improve follow up on the numerous interesting and relevant recommendations which we have heard at Warsaw on all agenda topics. This is one of the questions that might be addressed in the framework of the ongoing “Corfu process“ to which Ambassador Lenarčič has made a very valuable contribution in his keynote address earlier this week.

Regarding in particular the election-related ODIHR activities, the EU would like to reiterate its full support for the ODIHR’s observation methodology, which has been followed by numerous international actors for their own election observation activities, including by the EU. Still, we see room for improved follow-up to the ODIHR’s election-related recommendations.

Furthermore, we would like to encourage the ODIHR to continue to cooperate with the OSCE PA in the spirit of partnership and on the basis of the 1997 Co-operation Agreement as well as MC Decision 19/06. The EU welcomes the very good co-operation in the field between them in the course of this year.

The EU welcomes the fact that the ODIHR has sent expert teams to a number of EU member states to assess the elections to the

European Parliament. The EU greatly values the ODIHR's expertise and assessment of these elections. We also welcome the ODIHR's election-related activities regarding recent elections in several individual EU member states. This demonstrates the ODIHR's continuing readiness to broaden the geographical scope of its election-related activities in line with MC Decision 19/06.

Furthermore, we welcome the ODIHR's support in the presidential election in Afghanistan this year in extremely difficult overall circumstances.

We continue to support the ODIHR's efforts to assist OSCE participating States in the implementation of their commitments regarding the situation of Human Rights Defenders against the background of their often dire situation in a number of OSCE participating States and on the basis of our unambiguous common commitment from the Budapest Summit in 1994. The ODIHR's regular reporting activities on Human Rights Defenders in the OSCE remain a very valuable tool in this regard.

Against the background of the closure of the OSCE Mission in Georgia, the EU encourages the ODIHR to continue to follow the Human Rights situation as closely as possible by using all available means like in particular visits to Georgia including the regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia.

We commend the ODIHR's activities regarding hate crimes in the OSCE region, in particular its valuable reporting activities.

Finally, we would like to thank Ambassador Lenarčič and his dedicated staff for their excellent work and wish them all the best for their future activities.

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

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