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# OSCE Human Dimension Implementation Meeting Warsaw, 16 - 27 September 2019

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## EU statement - Closing Session

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Madam Chair,

The European Union would like to thank the Slovak Chairmanship and the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights for their thorough work in preparing and organising the Human Dimension Implementation Meeting. HDIM remains a unique platform for engaging with civil society and for listening to independent voices, exchanging information and good practices, but moreover an opportunity for all of us to be held to account in relation to our OSCE commitments. We thank all the human rights defenders, representatives of civil society and journalists who have actively engaged in the discussions. We have listened to the concerns and recommendations directed to us. We do acknowledge our own challenges and we remain committed to addressing them, including through constant dialogue with independent civil society.

We regret that Turkey again chose not to attend the meeting, missing a valuable opportunity to engage in dialogue with other participating States and civil society, particularly given the negative trends with regard to the rule of law, independence of judiciary, human rights and fundamental freedoms in the country. There is an urgent need to reverse these trends. At the same time, despite concerns raised in Vienna regarding the participation in the meeting of some representatives from the civil society, we positively note the delegations of Tajikistan and Turkmenistan at HDIM and we encourage them to continue the dialogue with the civil society.

Many speakers have deplored the crackdown in human rights and fundamental freedoms, the attacks and increasing pressure faced by human rights defenders, including women human rights defenders, the intimidation and violence against journalists and other media actors, as well as increasing intolerance and discrimination in many parts of the OSCE



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region. We heard tragic stories of human rights abuses and violations of international obligations and OSCE commitments. We trust that no civil society representative or family members face intimidation and reprisal for exercising their rights by taking part in HDIM. Unfortunately, we also witnessed many attempts by some participating States to whitewash the situation in their respective countries by employing organisations to discredit independent voices and distract attention from real issues and challenges, or to promote their government's policies, measures and views. This negatively impacts the dialogue among the participants and undermines the very purpose of this meeting.

We remain deeply concerned about the dire situation of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the City of Sevastopol since its illegal annexation by Russia which we condemn and will not recognise. We regret the many attempts by more and more speakers to whitewash the human rights situation in Crimea. We tell them once more: you have not succeeded. We thank the many brave civil society activists who continue to share information about human rights violations on the peninsula. We reiterate our call for full and unimpeded access for the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission, OSCE institutions, as well as to all international human rights monitoring missions and human rights NGOs to the Crimean peninsula. A human rights and humanitarian crisis continues to mount also in areas held by Russia-backed armed formations in eastern Ukraine. We remain firm in our call on all sides to swiftly and fully implement the Minsk Agreements in order to achieve a sustainable political solution in line with OSCE principles and commitments. The full access of all human rights organisations to the non-government controlled areas and the speedy delivery of humanitarian assistance are needed. We underline Russia's responsibility in this regard and yet again call on Russia to exert influence over the armed formations it backs to meet those commitments in full. While noting the recent exchange of prisoners between Ukraine and Russia, we also repeat our call on Russia to free all Ukrainian citizens still illegally detained, put on trial, or convicted in Russia or the Crimean peninsula.

The human rights situation in Russia continues to fall below its OSCE commitments and international human rights obligations. We have raised our concerns about the ongoing crackdown on civil society in Russia, the curtailing of rights and freedoms and the shrinking



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space for independent media, including through misuse of reinforced anti-extremism and anti-terrorism legislation, as well as the use of disinformation for destabilizing purposes. The latest disproportionate use of measures against opposition and civil society before and after the local elections including mass nation-wide raids targeting Russian opposition in many cities, detentions and excessive sentences for people taking part in peaceful protests questions the respect for fundamental freedoms enshrined in the Russian Constitution, OSCE commitments and other international obligations. We remain concerned about the systematic persecution of Jehovah's Witnesses, including the latest sentencing by the District Court of the City of Saratov of 6 Jehovah's Witnesses to many years of imprisonment. We also continue to follow the case of historian and Memorial representative, Yuri Dmitriev, in Karelia and call for his immediate release.

We denounce the human rights violations and abuses in Chechnya against LGBTI persons, human rights defenders, lawyers, independent media, and civil society organizations, and we call for thorough investigations and to bring those responsible to justice. We furthermore call upon the Russian authorities to make full use of the report under the Moscow Mechanism and to implement all recommendations contained therein.

We use this opportunity to reiterate our call to Azerbaijan to release journalist Afgan Mukhtarli. We will continue to follow closely the situation with regard to human rights, democracy and the rule of law in Azerbaijan, as well as in all the Central Asian countries, which is in many cases deeply worrying. We remain concerned by the continued enforced disappearance of many people in Turkmenistan's prisons, which reflects a broader pattern of continued human rights violations in the country, and we reiterate our call on authorities to immediately and effectively acknowledge this problem, take action and eradicate this scourge.

We take issue again with the intolerant statements that were made during the meeting. They have no place in this meeting and nowhere else in our society. All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights and everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms set forth in The Universal Declaration of Human Rights. We stand up for human rights for all and with all those who fight for them every day. We stay united against all those who want to divide us.



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The last two weeks have proven, once more, that OSCE commitments are more relevant than ever and we call on all participating States to live up to them and reverse existing violations. All participating States must respect the mandates of ODIHR, HCNM and RFoM as essential instruments in their efforts to fulfil the OSCE commitments. We reiterate our constant support for the work and the mandates of the three autonomous institutions. We must also ensure that the OSCE institutions are adequately resourced to play their indispensable role.

Finally, the EU wishes to thank Poland for its hospitality, and all those who contributed to the effective conduct of the meeting, including the moderators, keynote speakers, rapporteurs, note-takers, and interpreters.

Thank you.

The Candidate Countries REPUBLIC of NORTH MACEDONIA\*, MONTENEGRO\* and ALBANIA\*, and the EFTA country ICELAND, member of the European Economic Area, align themselves with this statement.

\* Republic of North Macedonia, Montenegro and Albania continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.