

**CONCLUDING REMARKS BY
THE EUROPEAN UNION AT THE OSCE SUPPLEMENTARY
HUMAN DIMENSION MEETING ON FREEDOM OF
ASSEMBLY AND ASSOCIATION**

Vienna, 9 November 2012

Mr. Director,

During the discussions over the past two days, we were struck by the fact that the vast majority of the recommendations made by the non-governmental organizations (NGOs) had concluded that the authorities should adhere to and respect very clear principles in the management of the right to freedom of assembly and association. We have taken note with great interest of the very interesting points made in several carefully drafted proposals from NGOs or associations of NGOs, and we sincerely thank them for this active work.

The European Union (EU) has, for its part, presented guiding principles for the benefit of public authorities with regard to how they should supervise the right to freedom of assembly and association in a manner that is in keeping with international standards and with our OSCE commitments. We presented these principles in our statements at the various sessions, and we are also doing so through the promotion of a draft ministerial decision that we hope will be adopted by consensus at the Ministerial Council meeting in Dublin this December (circulated in the OSCE under reference number PC.DEL/960/12 of 29 October 2012). In this regard, we note with satisfaction that several speakers referred to these principles during the discussions over these last two days.

Mr. Director, the European Union welcomes the monitoring work of assemblies and demonstrations undertaken by the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) some time ago in several countries of the OSCE region. We encourage the ODIHR to continue this important activity and have taken due note of the publication of the first report presented at a side event today. We shall pay the greatest attention to the recommendations made in that report.

Lastly, Mr. Director, we should like to point out that several NGOs have underscored that human rights defenders have been particularly affected by the restrictions on the right to demonstrate and to assemble peacefully and by the limitations imposed on the right to associate freely. We should like to assure civil society that the protection of human rights defenders remains a priority of the EU's human rights policy as reiterated by the Strategic Framework on Human Rights and Democracy adopted by the Council of the European Union

in June 2012¹. We appreciate the strong support expressed by a number of participants with respect to the EU Guidelines on Human Rights Defenders².

The European Union also hopes that the OSCE Ministerial Council can one day adopt the principles on the protection, freedom and rights of human rights defenders in the OSCE area. In October 2007, the European Union submitted a proposal to this end, but was forced to conclude that there was not sufficient political will among several OSCE participating States to work on our proposal. The European Union is not abandoning its goal of strengthening the protection of human rights defenders in the OSCE region and will continue to work to this end within the Organization.

Thank you, Mr. Director.

The acceding country Croatia³, the candidate countries Montenegro³, Iceland⁴ and Serbia³, the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidate country Bosnia and Herzegovina, the European Free Trade Association country Norway, as well as the Republic of Moldova, Andorra and San Marino, align themselves with this statement.

1 EU Strategic Framework and Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy:
http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_data/docs/pressdata/EN/foraff/131181.pdf

2 EU Guidelines on Human Rights Defenders:
<http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cmsUpload/GuidelinesDefenders.pdf>

3 Croatia, Montenegro and Serbia continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.

4 Iceland continues to be a member of the European Free Trade Association.