

**EUROPEAN UNION****OSCE Human Dimension Implementation Meeting
Warsaw, 16 - 27 September 2019**

EU Right of Reply – Working Session 4

Madam Moderator,

In reply to some remarks made during this working session, we would like to reiterate our well known position on the illegal annexation of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the City of Sevastopol by the Russian Federation. We did not, do not and will not recognise it.

With regard to several remarks questioning who is a journalist, we want to state that journalism is a function shared by a wide range of actors. We believe that protection of journalists should not be limited to those formally recognised as journalists, but should cover others, including community media workers and citizen journalists and others who may be using new media as a means of reaching their audiences, as stated in the *UN Action Plan on the Safety of Journalist and the Issue of Impunity*.

We regret the attempts to whitewash the human rights situation in Crimea. They have not succeeded. We continue to 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. Over the past five years, residents of the peninsula have been facing systematic restrictions of fundamental freedoms, including freedom of expression.

As the visit of the President of the European Council Donald Tusk to Tajikistan was mentioned, which followed shortly after the launch of the new Central Asia strategy, let me reassure you that for the EU, the promotion and protection of rule of law, of human rights and fundamental freedom remain at the core of the EU Central Asia relations.

Thank you.