



EUROPEAN UNION

OSCE Permanent Council N°1082 Vienna, 10 December 2015

EU Statement on the occasion of the International Day of Human Rights

This year, Human Rights Day launches a one-year celebration by the United Nations of the 50th anniversary of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) and of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), signed in 1966.

These two core treaties set out the civil, political, economic, cultural and social rights that belong to human beings from their birth and throughout their life, and have changed the destiny of many people.

Against the background of the current increasing challenges to human rights and the rule of law, and in the context of a global economic crisis, poverty and ever increasing inequalities, these treaties remain the bedrock of the EU's work on promoting and defending all human rights and fundamental freedoms, and are the vital international legal basis for their universality, indivisibility and interrelatedness.

The new Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy, which the European Union adopted last July, places equal importance on all those rights and engages, through concrete actions, to promote them and ensure their fulfilment for all. Moreover, the European Union is as dedicated as ever to assisting civil society organisations and all other actors, in advocating for the protection and respect of human rights, whether civil and political or social, economic and cultural. The European Union has a strong record of support for human rights defenders around the world; and the European Union itself is a compelling example of the benefits which flow from a vibrant civil society.

Our network of EU delegations and EU Member State Embassies throughout the world, the EU Special Representative for Human Rights Stavros Lambrinidis, and our teams in EU Capitals, join forces today to celebrate Human Rights Day, and will continue to advocate, defend and promote human rights in any place in the world where they are under threat.

Mr Chairperson,

In the context of this statement and the celebration of Human Rights Day, we have to deeply regret that we could not reach agreement at the Belgrade Ministerial Council on outcomes in the human dimension, notwithstanding the progress made towards reaching consensus on documents in a number of areas including torture and tolerance and non-discrimination, as well as on the wider issue of gender equality. We note the broad support for a statement on Freedom of Association and Assembly and a decision on Freedom of Expression and Media as evidence of a large majority of participating States who share the wish to strengthen respect for fundamental freedoms in the OSCE region. We welcome the incoming Chair's intention to continue to work on Freedom of Expression. We encourage them and the new Chair of the Human Dimension Committee to follow up on fundamental freedoms and human rights issues in the new year. We also note once again our strong support for the OSCE institutions as pillars of the OSCE's work in addressing human rights and fundamental freedoms.

The Candidate Countries the FORMER YUGOSLAV REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA*, MONTENEGRO* and ALBANIA*, the Country of the Stabilisation and Association Process and Potential Candidate BOSNIA and HERZEGOVINA, and the EFTA countries ICELAND, LIECHTENSTEIN and NORWAY, members of the European Economic Area, as well as UKRAINE, the REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA, ARMENIA, GEORGIA, ANDORRA and SAN MARINO align themselves with this statement.

* The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro and Albania continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.