



## EUROPEAN UNION

**OSCE Human Dimension Implementation Meeting 2013  
Warsaw, 23 September 2013**

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### **EU statement – Working Session I TOLERANCE AND NON-DISCRIMINATION I**

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Mr. Chairman, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

The European Union warmly welcomes the new High Commissioner on National Minorities, Astrid Thors, to this OSCE Human Dimension Meeting. The fact that the HDIM 2013 began with her address is an acknowledgement of the importance of this OSCE Institution, having marked the 20th anniversary earlier this year. This HDIM has given the new High Commissioner an excellent opportunity to present her views on how she intends to implement her tasks. We highly appreciate the address given by her today.

The European Union underlines the importance of the HCNM and expresses its full support for the work of the HCNM and her office. The HCNM and her office should remain a core conflict prevention instrument, providing early warning and seeking early action with regard to tensions involving national minority issues. Quiet diplomacy, which characterizes the work of the High Commissioner on sensitive issues of national minorities, is sometimes less visible to the public but brings results of lasting

importance. The European Union reiterates its strong support for the institution of the High Commissioner on National Minorities and we stress the importance to meet the commitment made by all participating States, without exception, to fully cooperate with the High Commissioner in order to enable the High Commissioner to fulfil the mandate.

Mr Chairman, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

The European Union strongly believes that protection of human rights, including rights of persons belonging to national minorities, is crucial to maintain regional peace and stability. We underline that aggressive nationalism, racial discrimination and related intolerance are direct threats to values like democracy and respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms.

The European Union regrets that discrimination is still widespread in the OSCE area, including in EU Member States. The European Union believes that discrimination based on race, ethnic origin, religion, belief, sex, age, disability, sexual orientation or gender identity endangers not only the stability and prosperity of our societies but influences the stability of the region as a whole. The EU will review best practices and ensure the use of existing instruments to support efforts to protect and promote the rights of persons belonging to minorities, in particular in dialogues with third countries.

We look forward to fruitful discussions and reinforced commitment by all Participating States in the field of tolerance and non-discrimination, which is an integral part of the OSCE's objective of building more stable, pluralistic and democratic societies.

The Candidate Countries, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia\*, Montenegro\*, Iceland+ and Serbia\*, the Countries of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidates Albania and Bosnia and Herzegovina, and the EFTA country Liechtenstein, member of the European Economic Area, as well as, the Republic of Moldova, Andorra and San Marino align themselves with this statement.

*\* the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.*

*+ Iceland continues to be a member of the EFTA and of the European Economic Area.*