



Permanent Mission  
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## German Presidency of the Council of the European Union

### **648<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Permanent Council**

**1 February 2007**

### Statement of the European Union in Response to the Report of the Director of ODIHR, Ambassador Christian Strohal

On behalf of the EU, I should like to warmly welcome Ambassador Strohal to the Permanent Council and thank him for his presentation. The OSCE can look back on a rich year in the area of human dimension activities. We express our gratitude to the ODIHR Director and staff for their dedicated work.

The EU welcomes the comprehensive programme of activities planned by ODIHR for 2007 as well as the Office's continued assistance to the participating States. MC Decision 19/06 on "Strengthening the Effectiveness of the OSCE" and the other human dimension-related decisions adopted by the Ministerial Council in Brussels, which underline again the crucial importance of implementation of commitments, give clear guidance on the way forward. The EU will spare no effort to stimulate the political will to address the remaining challenges in the implementation of commitments. The EU is open to considering new commitments as appropriate.

During the past year, ODIHR election observation activities have once again constituted an important and highly visible part of the OSCE's work. The EU highly values ODIHR's professional election observation methodology, which provides a sound basis for the assistance offered to the participating states, when necessary. ODIHR's long-standing, well established expertise is indispensable for the maintenance of the highest standards of OSCE election observation. Its methodology is based on a consistent and systematic fact-based approach, which constitutes an essential prerequisite to arrive at objective conclusions.

We welcome the fact that an increasing number of participating States, in line with their Copenhagen commitments, invite ODIHR to observe their elections. The EU encourages all participating States to continue seconding observers, thereby contributing to a geographically balanced composition of ODIHR election observation missions.

Combating all forms of intolerance and discrimination must continue to receive great attention by our organisation. The EU will actively support the implementation of the relevant Ministerial Decision adopted in Brussels. We thank ODIHR for its valuable support and assistance in the past year's tolerance-related events and for its continuing efforts in this field, including the strengthening of its Tolerance and Non-Discrimination programme. We commend ODIHR for its work on monitoring Hate-Motivated Incidents and encourage the planned increase of efforts in this area during 2007.

We emphasise the need for implementation of the three OSCE Action Plans, namely on: improving the situation for Roma and Sinti, combating trafficking in human beings and promoting gender equality. We have taken careful note of Ambassador Strohal's reference to the Action Plans, and also wish to extend a warm welcome to Mr Andrzej Mirga, as the new ODIHR Contact Point Senior Adviser on Roma and Sinti Issues.

The EU gives its full support to the continued work of the Democratization and Human Rights Programmes, as outlined by Ambassador Strohal. The overarching objective of ODIHR's thematic programmes is to support the participating States in implementing their Human Dimension commitments. We encourage all participating States to take full advantage of the expertise provided by ODIHR.

The Human Dimension meetings calendar is currently being elaborated. The EU welcomes and supports the choice of topics for 2007 as proposed by the Chairman-in-Office.

The EU would like to use this opportunity to stress again the importance of adhering to international obligations on human rights and the rule of law under all circumstances, including in the fight against terrorism. The EU calls on participating

States to support initiatives aiming at bringing forward work on Human rights defenders and Independent National Human Rights Institutions. We therefore fully support the proposal by the Chairman-in-Office to devote a day of the Human Dimension Implementation Meeting to the specific topic of “Human rights defenders and independent national human rights institutions“. The EU would also like to reiterate its strong support for the legitimate and peaceful activities of civil society. States should not misuse legal and administrative provisions for exercising politically motivated pressure on NGOs. We appreciate the continuing efforts of ODIHR to address problems faced by civil society and are happy to note the establishment of an ODIHR Focal Point to meet these concerns.

Finally, we wish the Director and his staff all the best as they continue their highly demanding tasks within the human dimension. Ambassador Strohal and ODIHR can continue to count on the full support of the EU.

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

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