



## **EUROPEAN UNION**

### **OSCE Permanent Council Nr 905 Vienna, 15 March 2012**

#### **EU statement in response to the report by the ODIHR Director, H.E. Ambassador Janez Lenarčič**

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The European Union warmly welcomes Ambassador Lenarčič back to the PC and would like to thank him for his substantial report.

The European Union highly values ODIHR's autonomy in its role as the chief OSCE institution focusing on the human dimension and providing support and expertise to participating States, in order to help them meet their commitments, as well as to civil society.

We emphasize the Office's pivotal role in the field of election observation and other election-related issues. We reiterate our full support for the ODIHR's election observation methodology, which has been followed by numerous international actors, including by the EU. We support close co-operation in the spirit of partnership between the ODIHR and the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, as stressed in the MC Decision 19/06 and on the basis of the 1997 Cooperation Agreement.

The EU calls upon all participating States to invite in a timely manner ODIHR to observe their elections in accordance with their commitments and without limitations imposed on the number of domestic and international observers,

and to fully co-operate with the observation mission. Follow-up of respective ODIHR recommendations must be an integral part of this process.

We welcome the Office's efforts to help participating States review their election legislation. We also positively note that various OSCE Partners for Co-operation have participated in election-related projects, including at the OSCE – Mediterranean Partner Countries' Civil Society Conference, in Vilnius December 2011. The EU encourages Partners for Co-operation to take advantage of ODIHR's expertise, in such areas as human rights, democracy and the rule of law.

We commend the ODIHR's Democratisation Department for its key role in promoting democratic values, good governance and the rule of law. We express our full support to its trial monitoring activities, including the recent report on the trials of 41 people charged in the aftermath of the 2010 presidential elections in Belarus.

We welcome ODIHR's co-operation with the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia in the War Crimes Justice Project, which was funded by the EU and successfully completed in October 2011.

We stress our support for the Office's work on freedom of assembly and of association. We commend the monitoring of freedom of assembly carried out in a number of participating States and welcome the publication of the Handbook on Monitoring Freedom of Peaceful Assembly as well as the creation of an interactive web-guide to freedom of association.

We encourage the ODIHR to continue its important activities regarding Human Rights Defenders on the basis of the unambiguous OSCE commitment of the 1994 Budapest Summit, including the monitoring of the situation of those detained or imprisoned in participating States.

The EU commends the joint efforts of the ODIHR and OSCE field operations in assisting participating States in combating torture, by means of training and awareness raising activities, through monitoring of detention facilities and by supporting National Preventive Mechanisms established under the Optional Protocol to the UN Convention Against Torture.

With regard to the work on anti-trafficking of human beings we recall the respective declaration of the OSCE Vilnius Ministerial Council. In this field as well as on counter-terrorism and on gender issues we strongly support close co-operation and avoidance of duplication between the ODIHR and the relevant structures of the OSCE in Vienna.

We commend the ODIHR's programme on Tolerance and Non-Discrimination and look forward to the forthcoming Supplementary Human Dimension Meeting on this subject. Concerning the ODIHR's comprehensive reporting on hate crimes in the OSCE area we underline the need for close co-operation between the ODIHR and participating States in order to gather the respective national data in a timely and systematic fashion. We welcome the recent publication of the Guidelines for Educators on Countering Intolerance and Discrimination against Muslims as a good example to counter intolerance and discrimination through education and awareness-raising. We also welcome the Office's training activities in countering hate crimes.

We have taken note of Ambassador Lenarčič's proposal to reform the ODIHR's Advisory Panel of Experts on Freedom of Religion or Belief and we invite the Office to enter into further consultations with participating States on this matter.

With regard to Roma and Sinti we recognise that improving their situation continues to present challenges, also within the EU. We welcome the Office's on-site visits in participating States, including consultations with relevant

authorities on effective measures to combat racism and discrimination against Roma, as well as the intention to prepare a new Status report. We fully support the ODIHR's focus on early and integrated education of Roma children, building trust within communities and enhancing participation of Roma in public and political life. We welcome the upstart of the project "Best practices for Roma integration" in the Western Balkans funded by the European Union.

Finally, the EU commends the ODIHR for its efficient organization of OSCE Human Dimension events, notably of the HDIM. We remain committed to an unrestricted and active participation of civil society at OSCE Human Dimension events as an essential contribution to the co-operation of participating States in the Human Dimension and the implementation of their commitments.

To conclude, we would like to thank, Ambassador Lenarčič, and his dedicated staff for their excellent work and wish them all the best in their future activities.

The acceding country CROATIA\*, the candidate countries THE FORMER YUGOSLAV REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA, MONTENEGRO, ICELAND\*\* and SERBIA, the countries of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidates countries ALBANIA and BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA, the European Free Trade Association country LIECHTENSTEIN, member of the European Economic Area, as well as the REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA, ANDORRA and SAN MARINO align themselves with this statement.

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

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