



EUROPEAN UNION

OSCE Permanent Council No. 1244 Vienna, 17 October 2019

EU statement in response to the report by the Director of ODIHR

We would like to thank Director Gísladóttir for her detailed report regarding the OSCE Human Dimension Implementation Meeting. We would like to thank the Slovak Chairmanship, the whole team in ODIHR, and Poland, our host country, for their thorough work in preparing and organising the Human Dimension Implementation Meeting.

The meeting was well organised and we thank you, as well as the current and previous Chairmanships, for the constant efforts invested in improving the organisation and conduct of the meeting. As you well pointed out in your report, we see many improvements and we are confident that you will look closely into the aspects that need further attention.

HDIM remains a unique platform for engaging with civil society and for listening to independent voices, exchanging information and good practices, but moreover an opportunity for all of us to be held to account in relation to our OSCE commitments.

We thank all the human rights defenders, representatives of civil society and journalists who have actively engaged in genuine discussions. Any action that will unduly limit civil society participation is unacceptable. No civil society representative or family members should face intimidation and reprisal for exercising their rights by taking part in HDIM and we call on all participating States to refrain from such unacceptable actions and abide by their OSCE commitments.

We deplore the attempts by some participating States to whitewash the situation in their respective countries by employing organisations to discredit independent voices and distract attention from real issues and challenges, or to promote their

government's policies, measures and views. This negatively impacts the dialogue among the participants and undermines the very purpose of this meeting.

We commend the many participating States who treat HDIM as an opportunity to engage meaningfully with independent civil society and the international community on issues of concern. We regret that one participating State chose not to attend the meeting, missing a valuable opportunity to engage in dialogue with other participating States and civil society particularly given the negative trends with regard to the rule of law, independence of judiciary, human rights and fundamental freedoms in that country. At the same time, despite concerns raised in Vienna regarding the participation in the meeting of some representatives from the civil society, we positively note the delegations of Tajikistan and Turkmenistan at HDIM and we encourage them to continue the dialogue with the civil society.

We have listened to the concerns and recommendations directed to us. We do acknowledge our own challenges and we remain committed to addressing them, including through constant dialogue with independent civil society.

During HDIM, many speakers have deplored the crackdown in human rights and fundamental freedoms, the attacks and increasing pressure faced by human rights defenders, including women human rights defenders, the intimidation and violence against journalists and other media actors, as well as increasing intolerance and discrimination in many parts of the OSCE region.

We take issue again with the intolerant statements by some civil society representatives that were made during the meeting. Hate speech has no place in our society.

We 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 which we condemn and will not recognise. We also regret that Russia, instead of using this opportunity offered by HDIM to engage in a meaningful dialogue on the implementation of OSCE commitments, attempted to legitimise its illegal annexation of the peninsula. We thank the many brave civil society activists who continue to share information about human rights violations on the peninsula and to stand up for human rights every day facing themselves intimidation, harassment and even time in detention. We call again

for full compliance with international human rights standards in the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol, as well as for full and unrestricted access to the peninsula for the OSCE SMM, OSCE institutions, as well as for all international human rights monitoring mechanisms and human rights non-governmental organisations. A human rights and humanitarian crisis continues to mount also in areas held by Russia-backed armed formations in eastern Ukraine. The full access of all human rights organisations to the non-government controlled areas and the speedy delivery of humanitarian assistance are urgently needed. We underline Russia's responsibility in this regard and yet again call on Russia to exert influence over the armed formations it backs to meet those commitments in full.

The human rights situation in Russia continues to fall below its OSCE commitments and international human rights obligations. We remain concerned about the ongoing crackdown on civil society in Russia, the curtailing of rights and freedoms and the shrinking space for independent media, including through misuse of reinforced anti-extremism and anti-terrorism legislation, as well as the use of disinformation for destabilizing purposes. The latest disproportionate use of measures against opposition and civil society before and after the local elections including mass nationwide raids targeting Russian opposition in many cities, detentions and excessive sentences for people taking part in peaceful protests questions the respect for fundamental freedoms enshrined in the Russian Constitution, OSCE commitments and other international obligations. We also denounce the human rights violations and abuses in Chechnya, including but not limited to violations against persons based on their perceived or actual sexual orientation or gender identity, as well as against human rights defenders, lawyers, independent media, civil society organizations and others and we call for thorough investigations and to bring those responsible to justice. We furthermore call upon the Russian authorities to make full use of the report under the Moscow Mechanism and to implement all recommendations contained therein.

In light of the HDIM discussions, we will continue to follow closely the situation with regard to human rights, democracy and the rule of law in Turkey, Azerbaijan, as well as in the Central Asian countries, which is in many cases deeply worrying. We remain concerned by the continued enforced disappearance of many people in Turkmenistan's prisons and we reiterate our call on authorities to immediately and

effectively acknowledge this problem, take action and eradicate this heinous violation of human rights.

HDIM has proven, once more, that OSCE commitments and their implementation are more relevant than ever and we call on all participating States to live up to them and reverse existing violations.

All participating States must respect the mandates of ODIHR, HCNM and RFoM as essential instruments in their efforts to fulfil the OSCE commitments and we use this opportunity to reiterate our constant support for the work and the mandates of the three autonomous institutions. We must also ensure that the OSCE institutions are adequately resourced to play their indispensable role.

The upcoming OSCE Ministerial Council is a good opportunity to take forward the recommendations from the Human Dimension Implementation Meeting with the aim of reaffirming and strengthening our OSCE Human Dimension commitments.

The Candidate Countries REPUBLIC of NORTH MACEDONIA*, MONTENEGRO* and ALBANIA* and the EFTA country ICELAND, member of the European Economic Area as well as UKRAINE and SAN MARINO align themselves with this statement.

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