



General Assembly Third Committee
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Item 68 b) & c):
Promotion and Protection of Human Rights
Statement delivered by
H.E. Thomas Mayr-Harting
Head of Delegation
Delegation of the European Union to the United Nations

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Madam Chair,

I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union.

The Candidate Countries the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia*, Montenegro*, Iceland and Albania*, the country of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidate Bosnia and Herzegovina, as well as Ukraine, align themselves with this statement.

At the outset of this debate, the EU wishes to reaffirm its strong commitment to human rights and its support for the United Nations' bodies tasked with the promotion and protection of human rights around the world. In these daunting times, as we witness an unprecedented attack on human life and dignity, the work to promote and entrench universal human rights is more important than ever. The terrible human suffering of millions of innocent people around the world deserves our full attention and solidarity. It is in this spirit that the EU is scaling up its response to current crises and reiterates its commitment to work alongside other members of the international Community to reach lasting solutions.

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

Madam Chair,

The EU is seriously concerned about the situation in **Syria** and **Iraq** and condemns in the strongest terms the widespread attacks, atrocities, killings, violations and abuses of human rights perpetrated by ISIL and other terrorist groups in both countries, and by the Assad regime in Syria. This includes targeting both minority and majority communities, systematic sexual and gender based violence and reports of the abduction and forced marriage of thousands of women and girls. The EU is determined to contribute to the international endeavour to stop these atrocities. A Syrian-led political transition and an inclusive political government committed to carrying out the necessary reforms in Iraq are crucial to sustainable peace and stability in the region. Moreover, the plight of over 3 million refugees in neighbouring countries and over 8.2 million IDPs in Syria and Iraq should not be forgotten. The EU will continue its assistance and support to the host countries in the region.

We support the work of the Commission of Inquiry for **Syria** and its efforts to prepare the ground for bringing criminals to justice. We condemn the gross violations of human rights perpetrated in Syria as well as the denial of humanitarian assistance by the Assad regime. We also strongly condemn ISIL's actions which constitute crimes against humanity and war crimes. The EU recalls that all responsible for abuses and violations of human rights and international humanitarian law must be held accountable and that there can be no impunity for them. The EU reiterates its call to the Security Council to refer the situation in Syria to the International Criminal Court and its call to Iraq to accede to the Rome Statute. We also welcome the Human Rights Council's request that an OHCHR mission be sent to investigate the violations and abuses in Iraq.

Madam Chair,

There cannot be lasting peace in **Syria or Iraq** or elsewhere, if the legitimate grievances of all persons are not addressed. Only an inclusive and genuine dialogue will allow for reconciliation and a lasting political solution. We also strongly believe that measures taken in this context should not be limited to security and counter terrorism considerations but must include a human rights perspective. Moreover, there is a need to address the underlying causes of

violent extremism, abuses of the right to freedom of religion or belief and societal fragmentation as well as the motivations guiding those subscribing to such extremism. The current targeting of persons on the grounds of their religion or belief is disconcerting. Only the full protection of the right to freedom of religion or belief worldwide and the fight against persistent discrimination and intolerance will ensure the full realization of human rights, contribute to the building of truly pluralistic societies and guarantee long-term stability.

Madam Chair,

The EU is also concerned by the situation in **Libya** and its impact on the civilian population. The EU strongly condemns the on-going violence, the human rights abuses and the violations of international humanitarian law committed across the country. The EU calls on all parties to ensure the protection of civilians and to facilitate the provision of assistance to people in need. We support all efforts made to address the deteriorating humanitarian situation, notably the displacement of people and disruption of access to basic services.

Madam Chair,

The EU remains deeply concerned at the on-going conflicts in **Sudan**, notably in Darfur, Southern Kordofan and Blue Nile, and the accompanying violations of humanitarian and human rights law, as well as the serious humanitarian emergency which continue to cause enormous human suffering and internal displacements. The EU supports the repeated call for a holistic approach to Sudan's multiple challenges and the need to tackle comprehensively the political, economic and social causes of the persisting conflicts, including through the commitment of all political actors to the success of the national dialogue initiated in January 2014.

We also remain deeply concerned by the humanitarian and human rights situation in **South Sudan**, which has further deteriorated. A sustainable and inclusive political solution is urgently needed; failure to act will accelerate and intensify the humanitarian disaster looming in the country. The EU calls on all parties to bring an immediate end to the fighting and expedite the IGAD-facilitated talks which the EU supports. The EU stands ready to provide the necessary assistance to the UN and the African Union commission of inquiry. The EU stresses the importance of thorough and genuine investigations into all

human rights violations and abuses to ensure that perpetrators are brought to justice.

In **CAR**, the situation continues to be fragile, including in terms of security, despite the efforts made by international forces to stabilise it. The EU strongly condemns the violence that has occurred in Bangui since 8 October and the attacks on civilians, humanitarian partners and international forces. It urges all armed groups to cease all acts of violence against civilians immediately and to comply with the Brazzaville ceasefire agreement. The EU will continue to respond to the crisis in the CAR as part of its comprehensive approach.

Madam Chair,

All these situations call for justice and accountability, with a view to ending impunity, providing redress to the victims and laying the basis for reconciliation and peace. We have already expressed our support for the work of independent commissions of inquiry set up by the Human Rights Council. The EU also stands fully behind the OHCHR **Sri Lanka** investigation currently underway. We will moreover support the work of the CoI on **Eritrea**. It is incumbent upon us to defend the independence of these investigations and take their findings into account.

The EU is therefore drawing on the Commission of Inquiry report for its resolution on human rights in the **DPRK**, where serious and systematic violations, possibly crimes against humanity, continue to be committed. The EU calls on the DPRK to immediately halt these violations and to address the findings of the CoI as a matter of utmost urgency.

We also appreciate the work done by the OHCHR to assess and report on current crises, such as the one in **Ukraine**. We are concerned about reports of killing, abduction and torture, as well as other abuses of human rights perpetrated by illegal armed groups operating in eastern Ukraine. We also condemn the deterioration of the human rights situation in Crimea - illegally annexed by Russia -, in particular the persecution and intimidation of Crimean Tatars as well as the continued harassment and discrimination against Ukrainian nationals and minorities, including religious ones, residing in Crimea. The EU welcomes the holding of parliamentary elections in Ukraine on 26 October and

reiterates its willingness to support Ukraine in its efforts to ensure human rights and democracy.

While noting the positive developments in **Myanmar/Burma**, the EU remains deeply concerned about the situation of the Rohingya in Rakhine state, and violence against religious minorities. We encourage the authorities to undertake prompt action to ensure accountability and bring about reconciliation.

Madam Chair,

Civil society organisations and human rights defenders are important partners in the effort to build inclusive, resilient and flourishing societies. Governments are more efficient where people are free to express their opinion or grievances, to organize themselves, and to hold the authorities to account. But, while people are determined to continue to give voice to their opinions, we regret that the space within which civil society can operate is shrinking in many places. The EU is concerned by the increasing restrictions placed upon non-governmental organizations and by the harassment and severe human rights violations inflicted upon activists. The EU welcomes the recent amnesty in **Azerbaijan** which is a positive first step in reversing the trend of recent months on which the authorities should build and release other individuals belonging to civil society organisations that have been detained or are facing imprisonment in relation to their activities.

The EU continues to closely monitor the situation in **Bahrain** and supports the framework set by the Bahraini independent commission of inquiry and the UPR recommendations. The EU firmly believes that freedom of expression and assembly are a key prerequisite if Bahrain is to overcome its current challenges. As Bahrain prepares elections, the EU urges all sectors of Bahraini society to contribute to dialogue and national reconciliation in a peaceful and constructive manner.

In the **Russian Federation** we deplore the severe restrictions placed upon freedom of expression, peaceful assembly and association, and reiterate our concerns about restrictive NGO legislation. The EU calls on Russia to uphold their national and international obligations and to ensure that NGO laws comply with international human rights standards.

The EU remains deeply concerned by the arrest and detention of peaceful human rights defenders, including lawyers, artists and intellectuals in **China**. The voices of moderation and non-violence should not be silenced. We urge the Chinese authorities to release those detained for exercising their right to freedom of conscience, expression and association. The EU also remains concerned about the human rights situation in Tibet and Xinjiang, and encourages China to address the grievances of ethnic and religious groups, and to foster a meaningful dialogue.

Madam Chair,

The EU regrets the continued use of the **death penalty** in approximately 22 countries around the world, including in China where the number of executions is worryingly high. Most recently, the EU has expressed its deep concern about the decision by a Court in **Pakistan** to uphold a death sentence for blasphemy, and hopes that the verdict will be appealed and overturned by the Supreme Court. In **Iran**, the number of executions carried out this year is already over 500. Many of these sentences are the result of trials that did not respect due process guarantees nor complied with international minimum standards. This systematic recourse to the death penalty should be seen against the backdrop of persisting human rights violations including oppression of political freedoms, including freedom of expression and association, and violations of the rights of persons belonging to religious and ethnic minorities. The EU is equally concerned about the increase of executions in **Iraq** and continuation of executions in **Saudi Arabia**, especially for crimes for which the death sentence should not be prescribed according to international minimum standards. We are also concerned about disproportionate sentencing, including the death penalty, and indiscriminate detentions in **Egypt**. While taking into account the serious security challenges faced by the country, including the recent terrorist attacks against Egyptian security personnel at checkpoints in the Sinai which the EU condemned, the EU notes with apprehension the lack of adequate safeguards for freedom of expression and assembly as enshrined in the Egyptian Constitution. Finally, the EU urges **Belarus**, the only country in Europe still applying the death penalty, to introduce a moratorium on executions as a first step towards abolition.

Madam Chair,

The EU is strongly committed to the indivisibility of all human rights and believes that the growing recognition of the interdependence of human rights, good governance and development should guide our joint work for the **post-2015 agenda**.

Finally, let us also mention **Ebola** which requires a swift united, coordinated and increased effort by the international community. The EU has just scaled up its contribution to provide urgent medical care to those infected by the virus, to help contain the epidemic and to support governments of affected countries to provide guarantees to medical personnel. More will need to be done to address the economic and humanitarian consequences and underlying causes. The spread of this lethal pandemic has exposed enormous gaps in education and information, as well as weak, under-resourced health systems, and lack of trust in public institutions.

Madam Chair,

Last year in this debate we welcomed the decision taken by the European Parliament to award the Sakharov Prize for freedom of thought to Malala Yousafzai. This year, we applaud the decision to award the Nobel Peace Prize to her, together with Kailash Satyarthi, for their work promoting children's rights.

In conclusion, the EU reiterates its unwavering and continuing support to the UN's work for the realization of human rights for all around the world.

Thank you.