



P R E S S R E L E A S E

EU Special Representative for Human Rights visits Pakistan

Islamabad, 29 October 2014: The EU Special Representative (EUSR) for Human Rights, Mr Stavros Lambrinidis, paid an official visit to Pakistan 26-29 October 2014.

During his visit to Islamabad and Lahore, EUSR Lambrinidis met with the Minister of Finance; the Minister for Law, Justice and Human Rights; the Advisor to the Prime Minister on National Security and Foreign Affairs; the Minister for Commerce; the Foreign and Interior secretaries; the Senate and National Assembly Standing Committees on Human Rights; the Ministers of the Government of Punjab and representatives of the GSP+ Committee of Punjab, and a broad cross section of Pakistani civil society, including women leaders, prominent lawyers, journalists and media personalities, religious leaders, representatives of the business community, artists and trade union representatives. The EUSR was accompanied in all meetings by the European Union Ambassador to Pakistan, Lars-Gunnar Wigemark.

The visit provided opportunities for in-depth dialogue between the EU and Pakistan on key human rights issues. The EUSR emphasised how the GSP+ trade preference scheme is a win-win opportunity, enhancing economic growth for Pakistan through increased market access to the EU, while acting as a powerful incentive to strengthen the two sides' political cooperation and improve the human rights situation. He stressed the need for tangible improvements in the implementation of the 27 international conventions linked to the scheme, covering human rights, governance, labour rights and environmental protection, and highlighted the EU's preparedness to work closely with Pakistan on all of these issues.

EUSR Lambrinidis was briefed in depth about the Government of Pakistan's efforts to strengthen the country's human rights infrastructure, including through pertinent laws and constitutional provisions. The EUSR also discussed the importance of implementing domestic laws to address major human rights challenges, including freedom of religion and belief, application and misuse of the blasphemy laws, access to justice, rights of women and children, freedom of expression and safety of journalists, fair labour standards, including eradication of bonded and child labour, and labour union participation. Mr Lambrinidis reiterated the EU's staunch and principled position against the death penalty for any crime and commended the Government for upholding the moratorium on executions. EUSR Lambrinidis noted that the swift appointment of the members of the National Human Rights Commission would send a positive signal.

EUSR Lambrinidis also underlined the EU's strong backing for the consolidation of democracy in Pakistan, stressing the EU's readiness to support the on-going electoral reform process, based on recommendations from the EU election observation missions in 2008 and 2013 and specific programmes to strengthen parliamentary institutions.

At the end of his visit the EUSR said:

“The EU welcomes Pakistan's ratification of most core international human rights conventions. Strong political leadership can now ensure that these commitments are effectively implemented. Education – especially for girls – is essential. Likewise, promoting tolerance, equal rights and access to justice for all citizens is a powerful antidote to extremism in all societies.”

Background:

Born in Athens, Mr Stavros Lambrinidis is an attorney, a former Minister of Foreign Affairs of Greece and a former Vice-President of the European Parliament. Between 2004 and 2011 he served as Vice-President of the Parliament and of the Parliament's Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs Committee. Earlier in his career he was Chairman of the Committee for Human Rights in the Bar Association of Washington, D.C.

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