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EU Human Rights Instruments and the Lisbon Treaty: state of play and the way forward

The European Union and Human Rights NGOs meet at the 12th EU-NGO Forum on Human Rights on July 12-13 at the Egmont Palace in Brussels. This annual event brings together representatives of EU institutions, Member States, international human rights experts and 100 civil society participants to exchange views and experiences on the topic of "EU Human Rights Instruments and the Lisbon Treaty: state of play and the way forward". Four areas under this theme will be explored: the fight against the death penalty; economic, social and cultural rights; relations with regional mechanisms; consistency between internal and external EU policies.

High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy/Vice-President, Catherine Ashton, said: *"The Lisbon Treaty offers us the opportunity for a more coherent, more consistent and more effective EU foreign policy, including our work on human rights. But the world is also changing outside the European Union. So we need to ask ourselves what we could do better. We cannot do it all on our own. Our partnership with civil society organisations remains more than ever a crucial component of our human rights policy."*

The Belgian Minister of Foreign Affairs Steven Vanackere added: *"The Lisbon Treaty has brought substantial changes and paves the way for strengthening the EU's role and action in the promotion and protection of human rights. This Forum puts the emphasis on the European policy instruments with regard to the promotion of Human Rights. We welcome the large number of NGOs from around the world coming to this important event and we very much look forward to their recommendations."*

The conclusions and recommendations of the Forum will be published in a report and presented to the EU Council working group party on human rights (COHOM).

Background

The annual EU-NGO Forum on Human Rights has been organised since 1999 in order to develop dialogue and common understanding between the EU institutions and human rights NGOs. The previous Forums have focused on thematic human rights policy issues, such as violence against children (2009), discrimination against women (2008) and economic, social and cultural rights (2007).

The EU human rights instruments and the impact of the Lisbon Treaty is the main theme at the NGO Forum in 2010, and workshops will centre around four topics:

- EU human rights instruments in the fight against the death penalty
- The role of the European Union in the promotion and protection of economic, social and cultural rights
- EU relations with regional human rights organisations such as the Council of Europe, the OSCE, the African Union and ASEAN
- Consistency between the EU's internal and external human rights policies.

Apart from conducting regular dialogue with civil society on human rights, the EU supports NGO projects around the world through its European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR). In 2008-2009, the EU has co-funded 900 EIDHR projects in 100 countries with " 235 million.

More information:

EU-NGO Forum on Human Rights

<http://www.humanrightsgoforum.eu/>

www.eutrio.be/eu-ngo-forum-human-rights.

Human Rights and Democracy in the World - Report on EU action (annual report):

http://ec.europa.eu/external_relations/human_rights/docs/hr_report_2010_en.pdf