

International Day of Human Rights

10 December 2014

Key note from Ambassador Filiberto Ceriani-Sebregondi

Head of Delegation of the European Union to Tanzania and the EAC

Dear Commissioner of CHRAGG and Acting Chairman, Hon. Ali Hassan Rajab (Guest of Honour)

Excellencies, dear colleagues from EU Member States,

Representatives of human rights groups,

Distinguished guests,

It is with great pleasure that I stand here today with stakeholders who are so engaged in the cause of Human Rights.

Today we commemorate the International Day of Human Rights – a day of particular importance to the European Union.

Our principles and values put human rights at the core of our action, domestically and abroad. We are determined to promote the respect for and protection of all human rights of all persons around the world.

The European Union continues to fight against all actions that threaten the universality, indivisibility and interdependence of human rights, and we offer unwavering support for those who defend them, sometimes at the cost of their own lives.

This year the European Union has promoted or supported country resolutions to the UN General Assembly on some countries – namely Burma/Myanmar, North Korea, Iran and Syria, where as you know the Human Rights situation is so appalling that in one case – North Korea – there is even a recommendation for the United Nations Security Council to refer it to the International Criminal Court. These resolutions will be voted in the plenary session of the United Nations General Assembly next week.

Allow me to start my address by sharing with you the statement by the European Union High Representative and Vice President of the European Commission, Francesca Mogherini, on behalf of the European Union.

Quote:

**Declaration by High Representative Federica Mogherini
on behalf of the European Union
on Human Rights Day
10 December 2014**

Today we celebrate Human Rights Day to mark the adoption, 66 years ago, by the United Nations General Assembly of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

*The theme for this year's International Human Rights Day - **Human Rights 365** - reflects the aspiration that each one of us, everywhere, at all times, is entitled to the full range of human rights.*

The EU is committed to upholding these rights. Two years ago we adopted the Strategic Framework on Human Rights and Democracy, together with its Action Plan, and we appointed an EU Special Representative for Human Rights. Since then, with the support of EU Member States, we have been advocating human rights in over 40 human rights dialogues with third countries and we have been engaging with regional and multilateral organisations, including the UN.

EUSR Stavros Lambrinidis has closely and proactively interacted with key partners and supported the role of civil society organisations throughout the world. EU delegations have been monitoring, reporting, and acting on human rights issues, sometimes under very difficult circumstances.

*We have achieved a lot but much remains to do. One such area of work is **torture**. The Convention against Torture was adopted by the UN 30 years ago today and yet torture is still widely practised around the world. This demands our urgent attention.*

The renewal in 2015 of our Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy will be the opportunity to renew our commitment and to address new challenges to the universality and indivisibility of human rights.

End of quote.

I hope we can all reflect on this theme – Human Rights 365, to remind ourselves that Human Rights should not be luxury good, but everyday's bread and butter for all of us, men, women, children and minority groups.

Hon. Commissioner,

I congratulate the **Commission for Human Rights and Good Governance**, CHRAGG, for organizing this workshop.

The Commission has an essential role in promoting and protecting human rights in Tanzania, as it stands as the interface between government and civil society.

I hope that the President will swiftly replenish the Commission so that it can fully perform its mission towards Human Rights 365 in Tanzania.

The Commission decided to focus this workshop on the Universal Periodic Review and we gladly decided to support it, since the European Union is a staunch champion of this mechanism.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

[The UPR serves to assess the human rights situations in all United Nations Member States. The Review is carried out by the Human Rights Council, an inter-governmental body made up of 47 member states. Council membership is based on equitable geographical distribution.]

.... As the Resident Coordinator already spoke about the HRC, I wish to add that many EU Member States are also members of the Council.

Current membership of EU Member States includes: Austria, Czech Republic, Estonia, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Romania, and UK.

From 2015 the 8 EU member states that will be members of the Human Rights Council are Germany, France, Ireland, Latvia, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom, Portugal and Estonia.

Besides, EU Member States are also very active in the UPR through their recommendations, including on reviews concerning themselves.

The European Union is convinced that the UPR mechanism has the potential to make a difference on the ground. The UPR is a truly universal mechanism, as its principles are applicable to all UN Member States without discrimination. Recommendations are made to countries from all regions, including other EU member states.

In our view the preparation for the UPR reviews creates positive dynamics in both governments and civil society. We underline that the State under review should work continuously on the implementation of the recommendations and embrace the review as an opportunity, not a threat. No country is perfect, but all can learn from others and improve, and pass the learning to other countries.

Civil society also has an important role to play in the UPR process. Independent NGOs can contribute in a significant way by speaking out and documenting human rights violations. I would like to commend the active involvement of civil society in the UPR process in Tanzania, which has given further momentum to this important mechanism. Human rights defenders are at the forefront of protection of Human Rights, sometimes in difficult if not dangerous situations.

Distinguished participants and stakeholders,

I wish to address some human rights issues that are crucial for the European Union:

Firstly, as you know, we promote the abolition of the **death penalty**. While we appreciate a moratorium on executions as a first step towards abolition, we continue to advocate for the abolition of the capital punishment in all retentionist countries. We have formally conveyed this message to Tanzanian authorities on several occasions.

Secondly, we fight **discrimination of all sorts**. We believe that all people are created equal and no cultural, societal or religious traditions can be invoked to justify any form of discrimination.

And thirdly, **we stand for gender and children's rights**. This includes the elimination and prevention of all forms of violence against women and children. We need to protect the children and free them from violence, anywhere. Here we feel in good company, because although this form of violence is present in Tanzania, we have a sense of real engagement from the Government, in Mainland and in Zanzibar, against it.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Finally, I want to share two reflections on the **UPR recommendations** themselves.

On the one hand, it is important to follow up on the 119 recommendations that enjoy the support of the government, and to show progress in these recommendations by the next review.

On the other hand, I also encourage the government to reconsider the recommendations that it rejected in the last review. These include recommendations on abolishing the death penalty, establishing a minimum age for marriage, adopting measures to prevent intimidation of journalists and to protect the cultural heritage of indigenous peoples.

In closing, I want to reiterate the EU's strong support to the UPR mechanism and highlight again the importance of the Tanzanian government and civil society to continue working on the implementation of the recommendations.

Once again, thank you to CHRAGG for organizing this workshop as well as to representatives from Ministries, civil society, and our Member States for being present here today.