



Brussels, 20 July 2015

FACT SHEET

EU Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy 2015-2019

The EU actively supports human rights and democracy around the world, using various tools and methods at its disposal, including financial assistance.

Background

EU Commitment to the Advancement of Universal Human Rights

The European Union is founded on a strong engagement to promote and protect human rights, democracy and the rule of law worldwide. Sustainable peace, development and prosperity cannot exist without respect for human rights. This commitment underpins all internal and external policies of the European Union. The European Union actively promotes and defends universal human rights within its borders and when engaging in relations with non-EU countries. Over the years, the EU has adopted important reference documents on the promotion and protection of human rights and developed a range of diplomatic and cooperation tools to support the worldwide advancement of human rights.

2012 Strategic Framework for Human Rights and Democracy and 2012-2014 Action Plan on Human Rights on Democracy

On 25 June 2012 the FAC adopted the Strategic Framework for Human Rights and Democracy and a first Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy for the years 2012-2014. The Council also welcomed the appointment of Mr Stavros Lambrinidis as the EU Special Representative for Human Rights.

Since its adoption in 2012, the Strategic Framework and Action Plan has been implemented and notable achievements include adoption of new EU guidelines on human rights. The EU

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also continues to enhance the effectiveness of bilateral human rights and democracy work, successfully promote action at the multilateral level, and improve the mainstreaming of human rights across the EU's external action. The EU Special Representative for Human Rights Stavros Lambrinidis contributes to the effectiveness, coherence and visibility of EU human rights policy. The EU also designates Focal Points for Democracy and Human rights related matters in its Delegations abroad, responsible for dealing with Democracy and Human Rights issues in their countries including contact with and support to local civil society organisations.

Policy Guidelines

Together with the new guidelines adopted under the last EU Action Plan, the EU now has guidelines on the following subjects:

- Death Penalty (updated in 2013)
- Torture and other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (updated in 2012)
- Human Rights Dialogues (updated in 2009)
- Children and Armed Conflict (CAAC) (updated in 2008)
- Human Rights Defenders (updated in 2008)
- Promotion and Protection of the Rights of the Child (updated in 2008)
- Violence against Women and Girls and Combating all Forms of Discrimination against them (2008)
- Promoting Compliance with International Humanitarian Law (updated in 2009)
- Promotion and Protection of Freedom of Religion or Belief (2013),
- Promotion and Protection of the Enjoyment of all Human Rights by Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual Transgender and Intersex (LGBTI) Persons (2013)
- Freedom of Expression Offline and Online (2014)

Human Rights Dialogues and Consultations

The EU conducts dedicated human rights talks with over 40 countries around the globe. Each dialogue is established in accordance with the EU Guidelines on human rights dialogues.

The aims of these dialogues include to improve cooperation on human rights bilaterally and within multilateral fora, provide assistance to partner countries, and to better understand

local conditions. Human rights issues are also, of course, raised in other forms of political dialogue up to Summit level.

The issues covered in each dialogue are decided on a case-by-case basis. Certain priority issues are however on the agenda for every dialogue. These include when relevant, abolition of the death penalty, the signing, ratification and implementation of international human rights instruments, cooperation with international human rights procedures and mechanisms and follow up to Universal Periodic Review (UPR) recommendations, combating torture, eliminating all forms of discrimination, children's rights, women's rights, freedom of expression and the role of civil society.

Declarations and Demarches

The EU makes extensive use of public declarations to put across its concerns or to welcome positive developments. In other cases, when it judges that this will be more effective, the EU may prefer to "demarche", or make private representations to non-EU countries.

EU Action in Multilateral Fora

The EU's commitment to effective multilateralism, with the United Nations at its core, is a central element of its external action. The EU speaks out to defend the universality and indivisibility of human rights as well as the independence of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, the Human Rights Council Special Procedures and the Treaty Monitoring Bodies. The EU also works closely with the UN secretariat and its agencies, funds and programmes, partnering on a range of global issues and challenges.

Human Rights are an important part of the EU-UN relationship. Multilateral human rights diplomacy is a core pillar of EU human rights policy and the EU is very active in UN human rights fora, regularly presenting initiatives on country situations of concern as well as thematic priorities and participating actively in debates. The EU also often takes up human rights causes in international negotiations and supports human rights mainstreaming across the whole spectrum of UN action.

Human Rights Clauses in EU Agreements

The EU seeks to have such a clause in all its political framework agreements, such as Association Agreements and Partnership and Cooperation Agreements, with third countries. The clause provides that human rights constitute an essential element of the agreement.

Rights-Based Approach to Development

Human rights and development are inextricably linked. They have the same ultimate objective to improve human well-being and freedom, based on the inherent dignity and equality of all people. Human rights and development policies and strategies are therefore mutually reinforcing and complementary. Following the adoption of the Agenda for Change and the Strategic Framework on Human Rights and Democracy in 2012, the EU committed to

move towards a Rights-Based Approach (RBA) for development cooperation. The European Commission has produced a toolbox to guide staff in implementing a Rights-Based Approach.

CSDP Missions and Operations

The EU mainstreams its human rights and gender policies in crisis management missions and operations. Human rights and gender considerations are addressed during the planning process and integrated into planning documents. Advisers or focal points for human rights and gender have been appointed in all CSDP missions and operations, and training courses on human rights and CSDP are provided by the European Security and Defence College and by Member States.

Election Observation Missions and Electoral Assistance

Since 1993 the EU has conducted more than 110 observation missions. Their purpose is to assist partner countries in their objective to hold elections of a high standard, by analysing the electoral process and providing an impartial and informed assessment of the elections.

The EU also provides electoral assistance which follows the entire electoral cycle, rather than a specific election. It provides support to the institutional capacity of Electoral Management Bodies, technical and material support to electoral processes, as well as the long-term needs of civil society.

EU Annual Report on Human Rights and Democracy in the World

First published in 1999, this catalogues EU work across the whole range of thematic issues, in bilateral and multilateral relations. In June 2015, the Council adopted the 2014 EU Annual Report on Human Rights and Democracy in the World.

Financial Instruments to Support Human Rights and Democracy

The EU has several financial instruments which support human rights and democracy worldwide, which include:

EIDHR (European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights)

The EIDHR has a budget of **€ 1.249 billion for 2014-2020**. Its key objectives are to enhance respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms in countries and regions where they are most at risk, and to strengthen the role of civil society in promoting human rights and democracy.

Instrument Contributing to Stability and Peace (IcSP)

The Instrument contributing to Stability and Peace (IcSP) is the EU's main instrument supporting security initiatives and peace-building activities in partner countries. It came into force in 2014, replacing the Instrument for Stability (IfS) and several earlier instruments that

focused on drugs, landmines, uprooted people, crisis management, rehabilitation and reconstruction. **It has a budget of €2.4 billion covering the 2014-20 financial years.**

Other funding sources that have the advancement of human rights and democracy as part of their objectives include the European Neighbourhood Instrument, the Development Cooperation Instrument, the Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance, the European Development Fund, and more widely the CFSP budget.