"Mongolia Country Update on Human Rights and Democracy 2017"

In 2017 the overall human rights situation remained positive with a competitive presidential election, the entry into force of the new Criminal Code, the new law on domestic violence and positive developments in some areas such as rights of children and rights to a healthy environment. However, there were also negative trends, notably the proposal by the President of Mongolia to re-introduce the death penalty. In 2017, economic growth was positive (estimated 5% GDP growth in 2017) and overall economic prospects are good following the acute economic and financial crisis in 2016. As part of the IMF package the government adopted a plan to reduce the deficit every year with an objective to halve it in 2018 and 2019. According to estimation, made jointly by NSO and the World Bank, the poverty rate in Mongolia reached 29.6% in 2016 – up 8% from the 2014 level.

In their cooperation on human rights with Mongolia, the EU and its Member States have concentrated on issues such as promoting the rule of law, assisting in the development of civil society and human rights defenders, providing the means to empower vulnerable groups at national level and in remote areas and providing access to effective mechanisms for redress and to public services relevant to the promotion of economic, social and cultural rights.

In March 2017, both sides held their first EU-Mongolia Human Rights Dialogue with discussions focused on possible cooperation between Mongolia and the EU in multilateral fora, implementation of the recommendations that Mongolia accepted during the second cycle of the Universal Periodic Review on the human rights situation as well as the implementation of the human rights conventions related to GSP+. In November 2017, the EU established a Delegation to Mongolia. The EU Delegation will be instrumental in implementing the EU-Mongolia Partnership and Cooperation Agreement (PCA), which includes concrete actions regarding the cooperation on human rights (art. 35).

Mongolia continues to benefit from the European Union’s GSP+ trade preferences arrangement. The report from the European Commission to the European Parliament and the Council on GSP+ covering 2016-2017 takes note of the progress in fulfilling requirements under GSP+. At the same time, it contains recommendations such as need to adopt executive decisions on adequate resources, training and capacities to ensure actual implementation of legislation and full implementation of the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment. Mongolia’s authorities should also address shortcomings identified by the International Election
Observation Missions both in 2016 and 2017, in particular those related to the right to stand for elections, the right to vote and the rights to have the freedom to campaign as well as a predictable and stable electoral legislative framework.

The EU continues to engage on human rights and democracy with Mongolia within the context of the EU-Mongolia Joint Committee, the EU-Mongolia Human Rights Dialogue and the GSP+ monitoring process. Besides mainstreaming of human rights and equal opportunities principles into development assistance, some of the projects have specific human rights topics or frameworks. Examples include: two projects aimed at protecting the rights of vulnerable migrants and victims of trafficking and promote environmental rights (EIDHR, 0.5m€); two projects to support Civil Society Organisations with a focus on rural areas (1.5m€); a project to improve the implementation of human rights conventions in the criminal justice system and strengthening the capacity of the General Prosecutor’s Office to effectively implement the new Criminal Code. In the area of labour rights, the EU continues its engagement with a project to support the employment creation in Mongolia (€8.2m) and a project on technical vocational education and training (€7m). Both projects aim at increasing the employability of jobseekers and workers as well as to diversify the economy beyond the mining sector. The EU is also implementing a multi-country GSP+ related project with the ILO on strengthening Mongolia’s capacity to report on progress in realising fundamental principles and rights at work, specifically in relation to child labour, force labour and human trafficking.

The impact of the economic and financial crisis on the society, institutional capacities, especially regarding the law enforcement structures and corruption, remain serious issues of concerns. The EU, in support of the IMF package, will finance a project on strengthening governance for inclusive and sustainable development (5m€).

By adopting the National Action Plan on Implementation of the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) Recommendations (UPR Action Plan 2016-2019) Mongolia confirmed its commitment to the protection and promotion of universal human rights standards. In addition, together with the EU and Argentina, Mongolia launched the Alliance for Torture-Free Trade which aims to end trade in goods used for capital punishment and torture.

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