



European Union

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(27 February – 24 March 2017)

Item 4

Statement by

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on behalf of the European Union

Geneva, 14 March 2017

- CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY -

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EU Statement

Human Rights situation that require the Council's attention

Mr. President,

I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union.

The Candidate Country Montenegro^{*} aligns itself with this statement.

The European Union is highly committed to the promotion and protection of human rights worldwide and welcomes this opportunity to discuss human rights situations in various parts of the world that require the Council's attention. With regard to the situation in **DPRK, Iran, Myanmar/Burma, Eritrea, Burundi, Syria** and **South-Sudan**, we would like to refer to our interventions in the respective interactive dialogues.

The EU is fully aware of the serious challenges posed by the terrorist threat to **Egypt's** stability and security and recalls the need to tackle terrorism in full respect of international human rights standards and fundamental freedoms, as also enshrined in the Egyptian constitution. The EU also recalls the importance of assuring economic, social and cultural rights that are essential in order to achieve sustainable stability, prosperity and human security. Likewise, the EU encourages Egypt to improve the situation with respect to civil and political rights, ensuring space for civil society and human rights defenders. The EU stands ready to assist Egypt in fulfilling these objectives, taking also into account Egypt's pivotal role for regional security. The EU calls on the Egyptian authorities to continue their efforts to shed light on the circumstances of the deaths of Italian citizen Giulio Regeni and French citizen Eric Lang and bring about justice.

In **China**, while acknowledging the progress made on a number of areas of human development, including the elimination of poverty, the EU continues to be concerned about the arrest, detention

^{*} Montenegro continues to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.

and conviction of human rights defenders and lawyers and the reported harassment of their families. The EU reiterates its call for the immediate release of all individuals detained for their human rights activities, not least Liu Xiaobo, Illham Tohti, Xie Yang, Jiang Tianyong, Li Heping and Wang Quanzhang and Tashi Wangchuk. The EU calls upon China to ensure transparency and respect for due process in the cases of detained human rights lawyers. The EU is particularly worried about the recent allegations of mistreatment and torture under detention, which should be thoroughly investigated by the authorities. The EU urges China to implement its law on the Management of Foreign NGO Activities in ways that do not hamper the development of independent civil society. The EU also calls upon China to respect cultural diversity and freedom of religion, not least in Tibet and Xinjiang.

Regarding **the Russian Federation**, the EU remains deeply concerned about the crackdown on civil society organisations and human rights defenders, including through implementation of the law on "foreign agents". Continued restrictions, such as the abusive labelling as 'extremist' of individuals and organisations, significantly limit freedoms of religion or belief, freedom of assembly, association and expression. Decriminalization of some forms of domestic violence is also of concern. The EU is disturbed by reports of torture in Russian prisons. It also remains seriously concerned by the human rights situation in the North Caucasus and in the illegally annexed Crimean peninsula, calling for access for international human rights monitoring mechanisms. It calls on Russia to abide by its international human rights commitments and obligations.

The EU is seriously concerned about the human rights situation in **the Philippines**. The EU enjoys traditionally close bonds with the Philippines based on shared values and interests and acknowledges a number of positive initiatives taken by the government, namely the renewed impetus on the peace processes. The EU also acknowledges that the fight against drug crime is a priority issue of serious concern to the government. However, the EU expresses significant concerns regarding the very high number of killings in this fight. The EU reiterates the importance of implementing the fight against drug crime in accordance with the rule of law and in respect of human rights. This must include the right to due process and safeguarding the right to life as well as the respect of the proportionality principle. The EU also calls for the protection of Human Rights Defenders and underlines the importance of freedom of expression and opinion. The EU calls on the Philippines to respect its obligations under international law and not to adopt bills reintroducing the

death penalty or on lowering the age of criminal responsibility to 9 years currently under discussion in the Philippines.

The political, social and economic crises in **Venezuela** are having a negative impact on human rights and fundamental freedoms, including economic and social rights, notably the right to food and the right to health. The EU underlines the importance of all national actors working together, within the framework of a national dialogue, to find peaceful democratic solutions and address the most urgent needs of the population. Political and civil rights must be respected, constitutional role of the national assembly restored, elections prospects guaranteed and jailed political opponents released.

Regarding the situation in the **occupied Palestinian territory**, the EU remains gravely concerned at the continuous acts of violence and loss of human life, the extensive use of administrative detention, in particular of minors, and the human rights implications of continued illegal settlement expansion, including evictions, forced transfers, restrictions on movement and access, demolitions and confiscations. The EU firmly condemns all terror attacks, any other form of violence from all sides and incitement. The humanitarian and human rights situation in the Gaza strip remains of grave concern. The EU recalls that compliance with international humanitarian law and international human rights law, including accountability, is a cornerstone for peace and security, and calls on all parties to fully cooperate with UN human rights mechanisms.

Thank you, Mr President.