

Annual report on human rights in the world 2007 and the EU's policy on the matter

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The Council adopted the following conclusions on human rights and democratisation in third countries:

- The Council welcomes the progress made in mainstreaming human rights into all EU policies and underlines the need to further strengthen these efforts. The Council underlines the importance of taking human rights aspects into consideration in all relevant geographical and thematic policies of the EU and stresses the continuing character of this work;
- The Council emphasises the need to further strengthen the human rights perspective in the ESDP and welcomes efforts made in this direction, such as the inclusion of human rights and gender expertise both in the planning and in the implementation of all ESDP operations, the compilation of relevant documents on mainstreaming and the development of a generic pocket card for ESDP personnel;
- The Council reaffirms its commitment to improving the coherence and consistency of the EU's human rights policy in its internal matters as well as in external affairs. The EU's Fundamental Rights Charter as well as the establishment of a Fundamental Rights Agency are to be seen as important steps in this context;
- The Council welcomes measures taken in the course of 2007 to further strengthen the implementation of the Guidelines, namely the adoption of a new set of Guidelines on the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of the Child. The EU has chosen "All Forms of Violence Against Children" as its first priority area;
- The EU reiterates its **firm opposition to the death penalty** in all cases. The adoption of the resolution on the moratorium on the use of the death penalty paves the way for the EU to step up its efforts to encourage retentionist countries to institute a moratorium as a first step on the way towards its abolition. Demarches were carried out by the EU in a significant number of countries. The Council will continue to take action on individual cases of concern;
- The EU reaffirms its commitment to the prevention and eradication of all forms of torture and ill-treatment within the EU and world-wide. The EU continued its global campaign to support relevant UN instruments, and encourages its partners to fully cooperate with the UN Special Rapporteur on torture;
- The Council remains deeply committed to the promotion and **protection of the rights of children** affected by armed conflict and welcomes the initiatives undertaken to promote and strengthen these principles in priority countries through specific implementation strategies, which will continue to be implemented;
- The Council will continue to support the important work of Human Rights Defenders worldwide. The continued persecution and harassment of Human Rights Defenders in many countries requires concrete EU action to ensure their safety and protection. In that respect the Council welcomes the elaboration of local implementation strategies to support the work of Human Rights Defenders by EU missions in third countries;
- Human rights dialogues are a vital instrument of the EU external human rights policy. The Council notes that the various agreement-based, ad hoc and local human rights dialogues with third countries are an important channel to promote human rights, rule of law and democracy and to express concerns. The Council welcomes efforts aimed at including all relevant human rights issues on the agendas of the Article 8 dialogue meetings. In this context the Council welcomes the first round of human rights expert talks with the African Union, which should pave the way for a regular human rights dialogue;

- The Council reaffirms the importance it attaches to the **EU-China** Human Rights Dialogue as a key instrument to build a mature relationship with China in this field. The two dialogue rounds that took place in May and October of 2007 provided a platform for a substantive and frank exchange of views between China and the EU on a wide range of human rights issues. The Council acknowledges the progress made by China in the field of economic, social and cultural rights, notably the recent adoption of the labour contract law. This needs to be matched by progress on civil and political rights and the ratification of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights remains a key EU demand in this regard. The Council remains seriously concerned about continued restrictions on freedom of expression, freedom of religion, minority rights, re-education through labour system, torture and the extensive use of the death penalty. The EU will continue to closely monitor the human rights situation in China and to work for positive change through continued and improved dialogue and cooperation;
- The EU remains deeply concerned with the continuing deterioration of human rights and fundamental freedoms in **Iran**. In 2007, the EU expressed on several occasions its concerns over the extended use of capital punishment, including the death sentences for juvenile offenders, and the use of cruel and inhumane punishment such as stoning. The Council is also seriously concerned by the escalation of restrictions to the rights to freedom of expression and freedom of the media, the harassment and persecution of Human Rights Defenders and restrictions on freedom of religion and belief, including those placed on the Bahá'í. The Council has repeatedly called on Iran to ensure implementation of its human rights obligations through statements and demarches. The EU regrets that Iran has suspended the EU-Iran Human Rights Dialogue and reiterates its willingness to resume the dialogue with Iran;
- The Council welcomes the continuation of the human rights consultations with the **Russian Federation**. The EU, however, remains concerned about certain developments in Russia in 2007 regarding freedom of expression, assembly and freedom of the press, especially in the context of parliamentary and presidential elections. The EU regrets that the electoral campaign for the Duma did not always meet international standards and commitments voluntarily assumed by Russia;
- Other issues of concern are minorities, women's rights (including trafficking), torture and maltreatment, including abuse of psychiatric detention, the respect for the rule of law, the effects of the law on NGO activities and of the counter-extremist law on civil society, instances of racism and xenophobia, and the situation in northern **Caucasus**. The Council welcomes the first round of the human rights dialogue with Uzbekistan in 2007, and calls on Uzbekistan to make further progress on human rights. As regards Turkmenistan, the Council confirms its objective of bringing into line the Ad-hoc Human Rights Dialogue with Turkmenistan with the structure of other official Human Rights Dialogues, especially in the light of the Strategy for a new Partnership with Central Asia. Overall, the Council remains concerned by the situation of human rights in **Central Asia** and remains committed to working for a concrete improvement in the human rights situation in the five Central Asian Republics;
- The Council underlines the importance of the **European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights** (EIDHR) and the need for the EU's continuous support for the promotion of human rights and democracy worldwide. The Council reiterates the need to continue to enhance the effectiveness and consistency of EIDHR and all the financial instruments relevant to the promotion and protection of human rights and democracy. To this end, the Council encourages the Commission to further strengthen the coordination of existing mechanisms within the EU and with other players and donors, making use of their specific inputs and experiences;
- The Council further welcomes the ongoing close cooperation with the **European Parliament**. At the same time the Council acknowledges the important role of civil society in promoting and protecting human rights, and will continue to work closely with the representatives of civil society in achieving the goals in the fields of human rights. The Council takes note of the recommendations of the Annual EU Human Rights Forum, held in Lisbon 7-8 December 2007, and underlines the need to continue the existing active cooperation among the European human rights community.