



**COUNCIL OF
THE EUROPEAN UNION**



Brussels, 8 September 2005
12801/05 (Presse 228)

**Presidency press statement - EU/Russia human rights
consultations
Brussels, 8 September 2005**

EU and Russia hold second round of human rights consultations

The European Union and Russia today held their second consultations on human rights. The aim of these consultations is to discuss issues related to human rights and fundamental freedoms in an open, constructive, and balanced manner. The first round of these consultations was held in Luxembourg on 1 March 2005. Agreement on these consultations was reached, upon proposal by the European Union, at the EU/Russia summit in The Hague on 25 November 2004.

Meeting in Brussels, senior officials from the EU and Russia discussed the internal human rights situation in the European Union and Russia, as well as international human rights issues.

P R E S S

Rue de la Loi 175 B - 1048 BRUSSELS Tel.: +32 (0)2 285 / 6319 Fax: +32 (0)2 285 8026
press.office@consilium.eu.int <http://ue.eu.int/Newsroom>

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Discussions covered Russia's international obligations and co-operation in UN human rights fora, in particular UN reform and preparations for the annual UN General Assembly's Third Committee as well as co-operation with UN Special Mechanisms. Co-operation in the Council of Europe, including the implementation of decisions and recommendations of the Council of Europe (i.a. Gil-Robles report, ECHR judgments, Protocols), and the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) were also covered.

The EU raised specific concerns about the human rights situation in Russia, notably the situation in Chechnya, the situation of human rights defenders, including specific cases, the independence of the media and freedom of expression, as well as other issues. Both sides raised the phenomena of racism and xenophobia, and recognised the importance of NGOs in promoting the respect for human rights.

In response to Russian concerns about the situation of persons belonging to minorities in the European Union, the EU recalled the full compliance with Copenhagen criteria by the Member States, and noted the importance of promoting the integration of persons belonging to minorities, as the best way of guaranteeing the protection of human rights and the protection of persons belonging to minorities.

Discussions were productive and held in a friendly atmosphere. The subsequent consultations are planned to take place early next year.

The EU troika was led by Alexandra Hall-Hall, Head of the Human Rights, Democracy and Good Governance Department, FCO, and Simon Smith, Head of the Eastern Department, FCO, of the UK EU Presidency. The Russian delegation was led by Mikhail Lebedev, Deputy Director for Humanitarian Co-operation and Human Rights, Russian Ministry for Foreign Affairs.