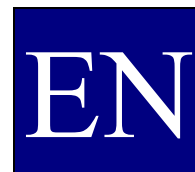




**COUNCIL OF
THE EUROPEAN UNION**



Council conclusions on EU priorities at the UN Human Rights Fora

*3222nd FOREIGN AFFAIRS Council meeting
Brussels, 18 february 2013*

The Council adopted the following conclusions:

- "1. Ahead of the 22nd regular session of the UN Human Rights Council (HRC), the EU reaffirms its strong support for the Human Rights Council and other United Nations bodies tasked with the promotion and protection of human rights around the world, including the Third Committee of the General Assembly.
2. The EU remains fully committed to a strong and effective multilateral human rights system that impartially monitors the implementation by all States of their human rights obligations. The EU will vigorously defend the universality of human rights and will continue to speak out against human rights violations worldwide. This commitment has been reaffirmed in the 2012 EU Strategic Framework and Action Plan for Human Rights and Democracy.
3. The EU pays tribute to the leadership of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Navanethem Pillay and her Office which this year celebrates its 20th anniversary. The EU strongly supports her work and that of her staff, underlining the full independence and integrity of the mandate of the High Commissioner for Human Rights.
4. The EU will actively participate in the Human Rights Council and General Assembly sessions in 2013 through statements and interventions as well as by introducing thematic and country-specific initiatives targeting key human rights concerns and promoting accountability for human rights violations. The EU will seek close cooperation with other countries to this end.

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5. During the upcoming main session of the Human Rights Council, the EU, together with a broad cross-regional coalition, will make sure that the HRC addresses, as a matter of priority, the grave situation of human rights in Syria. The EU will insist on the need for accountability and preventing impunity for the serious human rights violations and abuses, including crimes under international law, perpetrated in Syria. The EU supports the work and extension of the mandate of the Commission of Inquiry.
6. The EU will continue to draw the attention of the HRC and the General Assembly to the persistent critical human rights situation in the Democratic Peoples' Republic of Korea. The EU will reinforce its calls on the government of the DPRK to urgently improve the human rights situation in the country. Together with Japan, the EU will propose, at the HRC, the creation of an independent inquiry mechanism in support of the Special Rapporteur.
7. The EU will actively support the extension of the mandate of the UN Special Rapporteur on the Islamic Republic of Iran who undertakes important work to address the worrying human rights situation in the country and should urgently be granted access to the country.
8. The EU will also support efforts aimed at keeping the issues of accountability and reconciliation as well as the current human rights situation in Sri Lanka on the agenda of the Human Rights Council.
9. Gravely concerned by the developments in Mali, the EU calls for an appropriate response by the Human Rights Council.
10. The EU welcomes the cooperation with Myanmar/Burma on a consensus resolution of the General Assembly in 2012, reflecting the progress made while also recognizing remaining human rights concerns, particularly in ethnic areas. The resolution to be presented at the 22nd session of the HRC seeks to maintain international attention on the developments and encourage further reforms.
11. A key EU priority for the 23rd session of the HRC in June will be the situation of human rights in Belarus which continues to give rise to grave concern.
12. The EU supports that the HRC continues to address the state of human rights in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Eritrea, Sudan and South Sudan.
13. The EU will continue to present resolutions on freedom of religion or belief at the UN. A key objective for the HRC will be the renewal of the important mandate of the Special Rapporteur on this issue. The EU will participate in the discussion of his upcoming report which focusses on the situation of persons belonging to religious minorities.

14. Together with Latin American and Caribbean countries, the EU will devote particular attention to children's rights both at the HRC, with a resolution focusing on the enjoyment for children of the right to health, and later in the General Assembly. The EU will also seek to achieve concrete improvements for children in armed conflicts, in close cooperation with, and support of, the Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General.
15. The EU will continue to advocate for gender equality and women's empowerment and the full implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Programme of Action. The EU will push for a strong commitment to the elimination of all forms of violence against women at the upcoming session of the Commission on the Status of Women in March 2013. The EU strongly supports the work of UN Women as well as UN activities related to Women, Peace and Security, including sexual violence in conflict.
16. The EU will work with like-minded partners to continue to keep the issue of discrimination and violence against individuals based on their sexual orientation and gender identity on the agenda of the United Nations, in follow-up to the HRC resolution of 2011 and the successful cross-regional activities in New York.
17. The EU will continue to support efforts for the promotion, protection and enjoyment of human rights on the Internet and pay special attention to the protection of journalists and bloggers.
18. The EU underlines the need for UN human rights fora and bodies to address freedom of association and assembly, and to provide concrete support to human rights activists and civil society organizations. Legislative and other restrictions placed on NGO activities are a growing concern in many countries. The EU will also defend the role of civil society representatives and human rights defenders in the UN context and react against any threats to those who cooperate with UN human rights mechanisms.
19. The EU will also support efforts for the promotion and protection of the rights of persons with disabilities, to be given particular attention at a General Assembly High-Level Meeting on Disabilities and Development in September.
20. Democratic governance, the rule of law and the full realization of human rights are important for achieving sustainable development. The EU will therefore work to ensure that these key issues are integrated in the post-2015 global development agenda.
21. The EU continues to attach great importance to the UN Human Rights Council Special Procedures; their access to countries and their free and unhindered contact and cooperation with individuals and civil society are indispensable. The EU calls on all countries which have not yet done so to extend a standing invitation.

22. The EU also reaffirms its unwavering support for the UN Human Rights Treaty Body system. The EU will pro-actively engage in the treaty body strengthening process with the aim of improving the capacity of the treaty bodies to fulfil their mandate effectively and efficiently, while ensuring their independence.
 23. The EU reaffirms its attachment to the Universal Periodic Review, underlines the importance of preserving its universality and calls upon all UN Member States to effectively cooperate with the mechanism. In addition, the EU discusses with partners about the implementation of recommendations stemming from this review, as well as those formulated by Treaty Bodies and Special Procedures.
 24. The EU is committed to engage with countries from all regions on initiatives that genuinely contribute to the protection of human rights and strengthens their universal application. The Council stresses the importance of addressing key human rights concerns and discussing human priorities at the UN in contacts with third countries at all levels, with a view to mobilizing cross-regional cooperation for an effective UN human rights system."
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