



EUROPEAN UNION

OSCE Permanent Council No. 1480 Vienna, 4 July 2024

EU statement on the “Universality and Indivisibility of Human Rights for All”

1. The European Union and its Member States reaffirm their unwavering commitment to human rights. Human rights are universal, indivisible and interdependent, forming the bedrock of our shared values and the foundation upon which the EU was established. These rights are inherent to all human beings and we stand resolute in promoting, protecting, and upholding them globally. Respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms is integral to comprehensive security and is enshrined in the founding principles of the Helsinki Final Act.
2. Ensuring respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms is a prerequisite for lasting security and peace among and within states. Russia’s war of aggression against Ukraine, supported by the Lukashenka regime in Belarus, shows that human rights and fundamental freedoms are primary targets of aggressors. Their external aggression is accompanied by escalating internal repression as documented in reports by independent international and regional human rights mechanisms, including those within the OSCE.
3. Despite Russia’s attempts to evade accountability, all alleged violations of international humanitarian and human rights law, war crimes and crimes against humanity must be duly and thoroughly investigated and those responsible held to account. The OSCE has an important role to play in this endeavour.
4. We recall the principle of cooperation that has underpinned the work of the OSCE since its inception: namely, that human rights and pluralistic democracy are not to be considered solely an internal affair of any state. In Moscow in 1991,

OSCE participating States "categorically and irrevocably" declared that the "commitments undertaken in the field of the human dimension of the OSCE are matters of direct and legitimate concern to all participating States and do not belong exclusively to the internal affairs of the State concerned." This commitment was reaffirmed in Astana in 2010.

5. Human rights are universal. They are not optional but inalienable entitlements that every person holds by virtue of being human wherever they live and whoever they are. We deeply regret and reject attempts to push for a "multilateralism à la carte," where respect for international law, including international human rights law, is applied selectively, challenging international obligations and OSCE principles and commitments and silencing those who stand up for human rights.
6. Human rights are indivisible. Civil, political, economic, social, and cultural rights are interdependent and interrelated. The protection and promotion of one right cannot occur at the expense of another. All human rights must be treated with the same emphasis and importance, ensuring a holistic approach to human dignity.
7. The EU's commitment to these principles is reflected in its policies and actions, both internally and externally. Internally, the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights codifies the fundamental rights and freedoms that underpin the Union, including human dignity, freedom, equality, solidarity, the principles of democracy and the rule of law. It is legally binding on EU institutions and on national governments when they implement EU law, ensuring that these fundamental rights are respected and upheld across the EU.
8. Equally, the EU's external actions are guided by the principle that human rights are central to peace, security, and sustainable development. The recent extension on 27 May of the EU Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy 2020-2024 until 2027 reaffirms the EU's commitment, joining efforts with Member States, civil society, human rights defenders, democracy actors, and international organisations. The EU's human rights dialogues with third countries are a testament to its commitment to promoting human rights through

constructive engagement and cooperation. The EU acknowledges that no country is perfect and openly addresses its own human rights challenges. The EU encourages all participating States to engage constructively with international and regional human rights mechanisms and to address their own human rights challenges with transparency and accountability.

9. The EU firmly rejects the distortive narrative and derogatory characterisations on human rights and independent human rights institutions propagated by Russia and Belarus at the OSCE and other international fora. This narrative represents a strategic attempt to deflect attention from and justify significant and independently documented human rights violations and abuses in Russia and Belarus. Attempts to undermine the enduring value and universality of human rights, contrary to international obligations and OSCE commitments, and condoning human rights violations and abuses under the guise of so-called "cultural" differences or other false narratives are unacceptable.
10. All OSCE participating States must live up to their international human rights obligations and OSCE commitments. Although it is regrettable that consensus on holding HDIM has once again been obstructed, the upcoming Warsaw Human Dimension Conference will provide a valuable opportunity for an exchange of views with civil society and a reaffirmation of our joint OSCE commitments. It will also provide a platform to speak out against the democratic backsliding, shrinking civic space, repression, intimidation and reprisals against civil society, human rights defenders and media actors across the region.
11. We thank the Maltese Chairpersonship and the Irish Chair of the Human Dimension Committee for their dedicated efforts to strengthen the OSCE Human Dimension in these challenging times.

The Candidate Countries NORTH MACEDONIA*, MONTENEGRO*, ALBANIA*, UKRAINE, the REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA, BOSNIA and HERZEGOVINA*, the EFTA countries ICELAND, LIECHTENSTEIN and NORWAY, members of the European Economic Area, as well as ANDORRA and SAN MARINO align themselves with this statement.

* North Macedonia, Montenegro, Albania, and Bosnia and Herzegovina continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.