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STATEMENTS ON BEHALF OF THE EU

HRC 39 - EU Statement: Item 4 - Human Rights situation that require the Council's attention

39th session of the United Nations Human Rights Council Geneva, 10 - 28 September 2018 EU Statement: Item 4 - 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 Countries the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia[1], Montenegro*, and Albania*, and the EFTA country Liechtenstein, member of the European Economic Area, align themselves with this statement.

The European Union welcomes this opportunity to discuss human rights situations that require the Council's attention. The EU reiterates its strong commitment to the promotion and protection of human rights, including accountability for violations, and urges all countries to fully cooperate with the Council and its mechanisms. With regard to the situations in **Myanmar/Burma**, **Syria and Burundi** we would like to refer to our statements during the respective interactive dialogues.

The EU remains seriously concerned about the human rights violations in **Yemen,** and we will express our concern more in detail during the interactive dialogue.

While acknowledging the progress made on a number of areas of social and economic rights, the EU urges **China** to ratify and abide by the international covenant on civil and

political rights. The EU is concerned about the expansion of political re-education camps in Xinjiang. The EU is concerned about detentions and trials of human rights defenders and lawyers Wang Quanzhang Tashi Wangchuk, Wu Gan, Huang Qi, Yu Wensheng, Gao Zhisheng, Ilham Tohti, Qin Yongmin, Li Yuhan and EU national Gui Minhai. The EU urges China to release Gui Minhai and all detained human rights defenders and to thoroughly investigate reported cases of mistreatment and torture while in detention. The EU reiterates its calls for China to respect freedom of religion or belief and expression, as well as the rights of persons belonging to ethnic minorities.

The EU reiterates that the electoral process in **Cambodia** from which the main opposition party has been arbitrarily excluded is not legitimate. The lack of genuine electoral competition and the absence of an inclusive political process mean that the 29 July election is not representative of the democratic will of the Cambodian electorate, and therefore its outcome lacks credibility. The EU calls on the Cambodian Authorities to lift the ban imposed on 118 CNRP members, to restore genuine democracy and to respect and support the role of civil society and non-governmental organisations in Cambodia .

The European Union reiterates its concerns on the human rights situation in the **Philippines**, including the death toll associated with the campaign against illegal drugs. It is imperative to conduct prompt, effective, impartial and transparent investigations of all cases of death leading to prosecution in all cases of unlawful killing.

Regarding the **occupied Palestinian territory**, the EU urges all parties to take immediate steps to produce a fundamental change to the humanitarian, political, security and economic situation in the Gaza Strip, including the definitive end of the closure and a full opening of the crossing points for humanitarian aid, commercial goods and persons to and from Gaza, while acknowledging Israel's right to defend its legitimate security interest. Guaranteeing funding to UNRWA remains essential to ensure sustainable, continued and effective help for Palestine refugees. The EU also reiterates its serious concern about the continued escalation of violence and the loss of lives at the Gaza fence in the past months and calls on all parties to exercise restraint and to adopt measures to prevent further loss of life. Rocket attacks from Gaza towards Israel are also unacceptable. The EU continues to be concerned about Israel’s use of administrative detention, including of minors, settlement expansion, demolitions, confiscations and evictions and their human rights implications, including the pending demolition of the Palestinian village of Khan al Ahmar. The EU highlights the importance of unhindered work of civil society both in Israel and the occupied Palestinian territory and follows recent developments in this regard with concern.

The EU recognises **Egypt**'s key role for regional security and stability, managing migration and efforts to counter terrorism. The EU continues to call on Egypt to respect freedom of assembly, association and expression and to stop unduly restricting space for civil society organisations, including through arrests. The EU is also concerned about some articles of the cybercrime and recently adopted media laws, potentially further

restricting media freedoms and journalistic work. While taking note of Egypt's positive engagement with the special procedures, the EU encourages Egypt to shed light on any alleged case of enforced disappearances and on the circumstances of the death of Giulio Regeni and Eric Lang and bring about justice. The EU reiterates its concerns on the increase in death sentences, and calls on Egypt to suspend the passing and implementation of the death penalty and address the issue of military trials of civilians**.**

The EU remains extremely concerned about grave human rights violations and abuses in **South Sudan**, some of which may amount to war crimes and crimes against humanity, including ethnically targeted violence, sexual and gender based violence and the recruitment of children into armed groups. Attacks against humanitarian personnel are also of grave concern. The EU takes note of the signing of the agreement on outstanding issues of governance in Khartoum on 5 August but emphasises the urgent need to end the culture of impunity and reiterates its calls on all parties to hold perpetrators of violence to account, and to ensure transitional justice and accountability mechanisms, including the hybrid court are in place for the people of South Sudan. The EU also calls for full respect and implementation of the recently adopted UNSC resolution 2428.

The situation for human rights and civil society in the **Russian Federation** remains deeply concerning. The EU calls on Russia to respect freedoms of expression, association, assembly, media, religion or belief, which are routinely breached as well as rights of persons belonging to minorities and vulnerable groups, including by thoroughly investigating and ensuring accountability for persecution of LGBTI persons in Chechnya. We urge the Russian authorities to release Oyub Titiev and Yuri Dmitriev and protect all human rights defenders. The EU is concerned about the deteriorating human rights situation in the illegally annexed Crimean peninsula. We continue to call on Russia to grant unrestricted access for international monitoring mechanisms that respect Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity, and also to immediately release Oleg Sentsov, Volodmyr Balukh and all other illegally detained Ukrainian citizens.

The EU remains deeply concerned about reported human rights violations in **Venezuela**, including failure to protect the rights to health and to food and the severe restrictions on wider civil and political as well as economic and social rights. This is leading to a large-scale migration of Venezuelans into countries of the region with serious repercussions for those countries. The EU reiterates its calls on the government to urgently address all human rights violations and the pressing humanitarian needs of the population to fully respect democratic principles – including parliamentary immunity – and the rule of law and to release all political prisoners.

The EU is very concerned about the continued serious situation in **Nicaragua**; the EU deplores the acts of violence with over 300 deaths since the month of April. The EU urges Nicaraguan authorities to reactivate the national dialogue and cooperate with international organisations (OAS, IACHR, UNHCHR). The EU calls on the Nicaraguan authorities to ensure the security of the population and the respect for human rights,

particularly the freedom of speech and the right to peaceful protest.

The EU takes note of a decrease in the use of death penalty in **Pakistan** in 2017 and encourages Pakistan to expedite progress on its prospective review. The EU draws attention to the shrinking space for civil society and for freedom of expression with restrictions put on media and continued threats and attacks against journalists, bloggers and activists, and the continuing excessive use of blasphemy laws. The EU also urges Pakistan to address and implement the recommendations from the forthcoming final report of the 2018 election observation mission.

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[1] The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro and Albania continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.

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