

UNITED NATIONS HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL

FIRST SESSION

(Geneva, 19 - 30 June 2006)

Dialogue and cooperation on human rights  
(Human rights education and learning, advisory services, technical  
assistance and capacity-building)

\*

\* \*

Statement by H.E. Ambassador Wolfgang PETRITSCH

Permanent Representative of Austria

on behalf of the European Union

Geneva, 29 June 2006

Check against delivery

Mr President,

I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union.

The Acceding Countries Bulgaria and Romania, the Candidate Countries Turkey, Croatia and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia\*, the Countries of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidates Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, as well as the Republic of Moldova align themselves with this declaration.

The provision of advisory services, technical cooperation and capacity building as well as human rights education constitute a central tool in the protection and promotion of human rights. The EU therefore welcomes that the Council has been given a clear mandate to promote these instruments in consultation with and with the consent of Member States (OP 5 of A/Res 60/251).

The United Nations, in particular the OHCHR, and the International Community have a crucial role to play in assisting all countries in implementing their obligations to promote and protect human rights and fundamental freedoms. Investing in human rights capacity building also strengthens democracy and the rule of law and promotes development.

The EU believes that human rights education and learning are essential for the achievement of stable and harmonious relations among communities, and for fostering mutual understanding, tolerance and peace. In this regard, the European Union commends the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights and the UNESCO for their leading international role in this field and also attaches great importance to the contributions by regional human rights organizations.

In the World Summit outcome document States committed themselves to promote human rights education and learning at all levels. The EU is ready to take up its responsibility and will continue to provide future contributions to that effect.

The EU fully supports the World Program for Human Rights Education to advance the implementation of its programs in all sectors, building on the achievements of the United Nations Decade for Human Rights Education (1995-2004). In this regard we should all take a more active stand to implement the Plan of Action for the First Phase which covers the period 2005-2007 and focuses on the primary and secondary school systems.

---

\* *Croatia and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.*

We need to collect and disseminate good practices. We need to better facilitate exchange of expertise at national and regional level. We need to further develop educational materials and mainstream human rights education in national education systems.

Mr. President,

The EU very much welcomes the decision taken by the Heads of States and Governments at the Millennium Summit, to double the regular budget resources of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights over the next five years. This will assist the High Commissioner in effectively carrying out her mandate to respond to human rights challenges through technical assistance and capacity building.

The EU welcomes the biannual Strategic Management Plan of the OHCHR, which i.a. aims at increasing constructive country engagement. The EU further supports the objective of enhancing technical assistance to help States in translating human rights norms into practice on the ground.

The European Union's commitment to human rights capacity building is demonstrated through the support extended to civil society and international and regional organisations under the European Initiative for Democracy and Human Rights. Over one hundred million Euros are available annually under this programme, designed to complement bilateral funding by EU Member States.

One of the core elements of technical assistance is its voluntary nature. That States freely undertake to engage with the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights is central to the success of the programme. This relationship between the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights and the concerned State is based on partnership. A true partnership is built on broad and transparent participation of all stakeholders concerned and requires a high level of commitment from all actors.

The EU emphasises the need to ensure that the United Nations has a single, integrated and coherent human rights programme. This entails on the one hand monitoring activities through treaty bodies and special procedures and on the other hand assistance activities through the technical cooperation programme; both aspects being closely linked and mutually reinforcing each other. The recommendations of treaty bodies and special mechanisms should thus be integrated consistently into technical cooperation programmes.

---