

**European Union**

**UNITED NATIONS HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL**

**24th Session**

**(9 – 27 September 2013)**

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**Item 2**

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**Statement by**

**H.E. Mr Rytis Paulauskas**

**Ambassador, Permanent Representative of Lithuania**

**on behalf of the European Union**

**Geneva, 9 September 2013**

**- CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY -**

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**EU Statement**

**General Debate**

**Item 2**

Mr. President, Madam High Commissioner,

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

The following countries align themselves with this declaration: the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia[[1]](#footnote-1), Montenegro\*, Iceland[[2]](#footnote-2) and Albania†.

We would like to thank the High Commissioner for a comprehensive update to the Human Rights Council and reiterate our unwavering support to you and your Office

As this 24th session starts, the situation in the Syrian Arab Republic is extremely worrying. The EU is alarmed by the reports of the use of chemical weapons and by the continued violence, including killings of civilians. Any use of chemical weapons is totally unacceptable and a blatant violation of international law. The position agreed by the EU Foreign Ministers in Vilnius on the chemical attack of 21 August is reflected in the High Representative Ashton's statement of 7 September 2013 (which is made available in this room).

The EU is appalled by the continued widespread and systematic gross violations of human rights and abuses. We condemn the atrocities committed by the Syrian regime, which, according to reporting by the Commission of Inquiry, amount to crimes against humanity. We reaffirm that there must be no impunity for any such violations and we thank you for repeatedly pointing at the role of the International Criminal Court in this respect. We also repeat our call on the Syrian authorities to grant immediate and unrestricted access to the Commission of Inquiry. In light of the dramatic human rights situation, we appreciate your active and vocal role on Syria.

Madam High Commissioner,

We wish to commend your efforts to respond to recent developments in Egypt.

The EU has a long and close relationship with the Egyptian people and stands by them in their ongoing search for democracy, respect for human rights, dignity, social justice and security. It is therefore with great concern that the EU is following recent events. Like you we welcome Egypt´s readiness to host a regional office in Cairo, and we support your Office's request to "deploy human rights officers [to] assess the situation on the ground", to complement domestic efforts to address the human rights situation. The Special Rapporteurs who have asked to visit may also usefully contribute.

The EU condemns in the clearest possible terms all acts of violence, including the bomb attack in Cairo on September 5. The EU believes the recent operations of the Egyptian security forces have been disproportionate and have resulted in an unacceptable large number of deaths and injuries. As the EU Foreign Ministers stated on 21 August, the EU deplores the killing of protestors on 14 August. The EU also strongly condemns acts of terrorism such as the murder of policemen in the Sinai, the destruction of many churches, targeting the Coptic community and other religious minorities, as well as attacks on government installations. All perpetrators must be brought to justice. The EU calls on Egypt to ensure an independent, impartial and effective investigation into all killings and acts of violence, including those of 14 August, and make its results accessible to the public.

While the EU respects the government's responsibility for maintaining security for all citizens, it calls on the authorities to complete cessation of the state of emergency, to restore due process as a matter of urgency, to release all those imprisoned in the context of their peaceful activities, including all political prisoners and respect international obligations regarding the treatment of detainees. The EU calls on Egypt to fully respect freedom of opinion and expression, including with regard to the media and to adopt a legal framework that guarantees freedom of association and a thriving and independent civil society. The EU welcomes the political road map and hopes that an inclusive political process lead to the adoption of a new constitution and holding the parliamentary and presidential elections in accordance with international standards.

Madam High Commissioner,

We value the work of the High Commissioner, her Deputy and the Office addressing human rights situations worldwide and are grateful for their active engagement, including recent visits in the countries that merit the Council's attention, such as Sri Lanka.

The EU fully supports all efforts to promote national reconciliation and accountability in Sri Lanka and ensure protection of human rights and an end to impunity.  We urge the Government of Sri Lanka to implement effectively the recommendations of the LLRC as well as to conduct independent and credible investigations with regard to allegations of violations of international human rights law and international humanitarian law.  The EU encourages the Government to fully cooperate with the UN Human Rights mechanisms and allow access for all special procedures mandate holders. We are, however, dismayed about the reported reprisals against individuals you met during your recent visit.

Madam High Commissioner,

We commend the evolving work of your Office to bring about progress on a wide range of thematic issues. In this context we welcome the recent successful launch of the “Free and equal” campaign for LGBTI equality and non-discrimination.

The EU would like to reiterate its continued support to the work of the NGOs and human rights defenders and is looking forward to their participation and contributions at this session.

To conclude, we express our continued appreciation for your work and that of your Office.

1. The Candidate countries former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Montenegro as well as potential candidate country Albania continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Candidate Country Iceland continues to be a member of the EFTA and of the European Economic Area. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)