



**European Union**

**UNITED NATIONS HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL**

**24<sup>th</sup> Session**

**(9 – 27 September 2013)**

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**Item 4**

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**Statement by**

**H.E. Mr Rytis Paulauskas**

**Ambassador, Permanent Representative of Lithuania**

**on behalf of the European Union**

**Geneva, 17 September 2013**

**- CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY -**

**UNITED NATIONS  
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**EU Statement**

**General Debate**

**Item 4**

**Human Rights that require the Council's attention**

Mr. President,

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<sup>\*</sup>, Montenegro<sup>\*</sup>, Iceland<sup>†</sup> and Liechtenstein<sup>‡</sup>.

The EU welcomes the Council's continuous work on a number of situations of concern. In the interactive dialogues earlier this week, the European Union thoroughly commented on the widespread and systematic human rights violations in the **Syrian Arab Republic**. The EU also expressed concerns regarding the ever-deteriorating situation in the **Democratic People's Republic of Korea**. The EU reiterates its concerns and urges both these countries to cooperate fully with the Council and its mechanisms.

The European Union is also concerned by the renewed fighting in **Eastern DRC** and repeated M23 attacks on both the civilian population and MONUSCO, which aggravates the already dire humanitarian and human rights situation on the ground. Serious allegations of human rights violations such as arbitrary killings, sexual violence and mass rapes, including as a weapon of war, by both armed groups and security forces must be duly investigated and perpetrators brought to justice. We commend the Government's steps taken in this regard and urge it to intensify its fight

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<sup>\*</sup> The Candidate countries former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Montenegro continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.

<sup>†</sup> Candidate Country Iceland continues to be a member of the EFTA and of the European Economic Area.

<sup>‡</sup> Liechtenstein is member of the EFTA and the European Economic Area.

against the overall impunity. The EU also calls on all parties to respect humanitarian efforts and ensure humanitarian access.

The EU welcomes the recent, very timely fact-finding mission by the OHCHR to the **Central African Republic**. We urge the current authorities to take immediate steps to put an end to all human rights violations and to ensure that there is no impunity for perpetrators.

The European Union firmly condemns ongoing human rights violations in **Sudan**, by security forces, rebels and other armed groups, perpetrated in total impunity, as well as indiscriminate bombing and armed attacks by government forces and rebels of civilians in Darfur, Southern Kordofan and Blue Nile states. We are also concerned about increased restrictions on the freedom of expression, and are looking forward to further discussing the situation with the Independent Expert in the interactive dialogue next week.

The EU is gravely concerned by the violent conflict in **South Sudan's** Jonglei state and the alarming reports of human rights violations against civilians. The EU urges the Government of South Sudan to ensure a safe environment for the civilian population and hold accountable all those who have committed abuses.

The EU remains deeply concerned about the human rights situation in **Eritrea**. We continue to call on Eritrea to honour its international human rights obligations, to cooperate with the Special Rapporteur, and to unconditionally release all persons detained in Eritrea for having peacefully expressed their views, including the Eritrean-European National Dawit Isaak.

Continuous human rights violations in **Belarus**, particularly restrictions of freedoms of assembly, association and expression, undue restrictions on the work and functioning of civil society organizations, and the repression of alternative political thought are also of great concern to us. We call on Belarus to release and rehabilitate all remaining political prisoners, to stop the harassment of civil society, the political opposition and the independent media and to cooperate fully with the Special Rapporteur. The EU encourages Belarus to join a global moratorium on the death penalty as a first step towards its universal abolition.

In view of the new restrictive legislation on the work of NGO's, we encourage the **Russian Federation** to ensure an enabling environment for the work of civil society organizations and human rights defenders and to take concrete steps to guarantee the freedoms of expression, assembly and association. We have serious concerns about the effect of the federal law against propaganda of non-traditional sexual relations to minors, reinforcing discrimination against LGBTI

people. We call on the Russian Federation to uphold its commitments to protect the enjoyment of these rights by all, and to actively strive towards a more conducive attitude concerning the inclusion and tolerance of minorities in the Russian society

The EU remains deeply concerned about the human rights situation in **Iran**, and notes the continued high rate of executions. The EU strongly calls on Iran to honour its international human rights obligations, including full and equal enjoyment of rights by women, and fully cooperate with the Special Rapporteur on Iran.

**China** has made pledges relating to minority rights and freedom of expression and association as part of its bid for re-election to the HRC. Against these commitments, the EU expresses its concerns about on-going reports of human rights violations in China, particularly the use of force against peaceful protesters, especially in Tibetan-inhabited areas and Xinjiang. The EU is likewise concerned about the widespread exercise of the capital punishment. We would also like to reiterate our deep concerns regarding the detention of several Chinese civil society activists, including Dr Xu Zhiyong. While encouraging China to continue its efforts to fight corruption and strengthen the rule of law, the EU urges China fully to respect the rights to freedom of expression, assembly and association, and rights of persons belonging to minorities. The EU looks forward to China's participation at the forthcoming UPR examination scheduled for October.

The EU reiterates its concerns regarding the situation in occupied Palestinian territory, as expressed at the March session. The EU welcomes the resumption of direct talks between the **Palestinians and the Israelis** and hopes that these talks will lead to tangible and timely progress. The European Union urges all parties to refrain from actions which could undermine the negotiation process and the prospects of peace. The EU will continue to address all issues that put the viability of the two-state solution at risk, as it remains convinced that long term peace and security can only be sustained if human rights and international humanitarian law are fully respected by all.

Finally, the European Union listened carefully to the statement of the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Myanmar last Friday and commends **Myanmar/Burma** for its efforts towards democracy and prosperity. We urge the Government to intensify work on the remaining human rights concerns, and encourage it to swiftly follow up on its commitment relevant to the opening of the OHCHR country office with a full mandate.

The EU also follows with concern the human rights situation in **Azerbaijan**, in particular increased restrictions on freedoms of expression, association and assembly. We call upon Azerbaijan to

safeguard a conducive environment for holding pluralistic elections in October 2013, and in this regard to ensure due investigation of the charges against presidential candidate Ilgar Mammadov.