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Subject:	Council Conclusions on EU priorities at the UN Human Rights Fora

On 10 February 2014, the Council adopted the Council Conclusions on EU priorities at the UN Human Rights Fora, as attached to this note.

Council Conclusions on
EU priorities at the UN Human Rights Fora

1. Ahead of the 25th regular session of the UN Human Rights Council (HRC) and following the conclusion of the Third Committee of the 68th UN General Assembly, the EU reaffirms its strong commitment to and support for the HRC and other United Nations bodies tasked with the promotion and protection of human rights worldwide.
2. The EU is, and will remain, a vocal advocate of human rights, and lends its full support to the multilateral human rights system, which plays a critical role in the promotion and protection of universal human rights norms and standards and in the monitoring of compliance. This commitment, affirmed in the EU Strategic Framework and Action Plan for Human Rights and Democracy, guides EU action in this area.
3. The EU pays tribute, at the end of her tenure, to the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Navanethem Pillay and her staff for their dedicated work, including in raising awareness for the plight of victims of human rights violations worldwide, and mainstreaming human rights across the United Nations system. The EU supports and defends the independence and integrity of the mandate of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, which, over the 20 years of its existence, has greatly contributed to advancing the realization of all human rights for all.
4. Through close cooperation with all countries, institutions and stakeholders, the EU will be an active and determined participant in the UN Human Rights Council and the General Assembly sessions of 2014. The EU is committed to working at the UN to promote and protect the universality of human rights, to prevent and respond to serious human rights violations, and to express its concerns and positions, contributing to debates and pursuing thematic and country-specific initiatives.

5. The EU will continue to promote full cooperation with and support to the UN Human Rights Council Special Procedures, upholding the independence of the mandate holders and supporting their free and unhindered contact and cooperation with individuals and civil society. The EU also reaffirms its commitment to the Universal Period Review and calls upon all countries to effectively cooperate with this mechanism.
6. The EU reaffirms its unwavering support for the UN Human Rights Treaty Body system. Maintaining their independence remains a key objective for the EU, and the EU will seek to improve their capacity to fulfil their mandate effectively and efficiently, while ensuring their independence. The EU will encourage steps by all stakeholders in this regard.
7. The situation in Syria remains one of the most acute and dire human rights and humanitarian crises of recent history, which continues to require the urgent and undivided attention of the UN human rights bodies. At the upcoming HRC session the EU will once again urge all parties, especially the regime, to end all violations and abuses of human rights and international humanitarian law, press strongly for immediate and unhindered humanitarian access across the entire country, and seek to ensure accountability, ending impunity. The EU will continue to support the Commission of Inquiry and urge for its immediate and unfettered access to the country. The EU again reiterates its call on the UN Security Council to urgently address the situation in Syria in these aspects, including on a possible referral to the International Criminal Court.
8. The grave and systematic human rights violations in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea deserve the attention of the international community. The EU strongly supports the work of the Commission of Inquiry investigating the human rights situation in the DPRK, and will ensure follow-up to its report and recommendations upon publication, including on accountability.

9. Against the backdrop of an evolving political situation, the EU remains very concerned by the enduring human rights abuses and violations in Iran, including a recent spate of executions. The EU will continue to push for tangible changes and access for UN mandate holders. In view of this the EU will support the extension of the Special Rapporteur's mandate and keeping the country on the agenda of the General Assembly.
10. The EU will actively support efforts to enhance accountability and reconciliation in Sri Lanka, including a credible and independent investigation into the alleged severe crimes during the civil war, as well as to address the current human rights situation in the country.
11. The EU welcomes the cooperation with Myanmar/Burma on a second consensus resolution of the General Assembly in 2013, reflecting the progress made in many areas, as well as remaining concerns such as the situation in Rakhine State, inter-communal violence, and the situation in conflict-affected ethnic areas, such as Kachin State. The EU will continue to engage in active dialogue with Myanmar/Burma and other stakeholders to maintain international attention on developments and encourage further progress, and press for the swift establishment of the OHCHR country office.
12. The EU will continue to support the UN Special Rapporteur on Belarus as he addresses the troubling situation in that country, and will support the further renewal of his mandate as a key EU priority for the 26th session of the HRC. In particular, the EU will, through the HRC, raise attention to the systemic and systematic violations of human rights. The EU will also reiterate its call for the prompt and unconditional release and rehabilitation of all political prisoners.

13. The EU continues to call on all parties to the conflict in the Central African Republic to end the violent attacks against the population and human rights violations, and to implement the resolution of the Human Rights Council Special Session. In view of the worrying situation in South Sudan, where hostilities have resulted in suffering, loss of life, and large-scale human rights violations, the EU will press for an adequate response of the HRC. The EU will highlight the dire situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, where pervasive human rights violations continue to take place, including gender-based violence, sexual violence as a method of war, and crimes against children. The EU will also support that the HRC addresses the human rights situation in Eritrea, Mali and Sudan.
14. As a firm advocate of the abolition of the death penalty the EU will express its strong and principled opposition to the death penalty through all appropriate UN bodies and channels. The EU, in discussion with all sides, will seek to consolidate and strengthen a broad cross-regional coalition in support of the resolution on a moratorium on the death penalty.
15. The EU will continue to advocate for Freedom of Religion or Belief as a fundamental human right at the UN and call for the implementation of respective resolutions by all UN Member States. The EU looks forward to enhanced collaboration with partners in this area and will continue to support the work of the UN Special Rapporteur.
16. On the 25th anniversary of the adoption of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the EU, in close cooperation with Latin American and Caribbean countries, will again introduce initiatives to promote the rights and the protection of children. The EU will maintain its support for the Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General on Violence Against Children and the Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict.

17. The EU will work to advance women's rights, gender equality, and women's empowerment throughout the year. We remain committed to the promotion, protection and fulfilment of all human rights and to the full and effective implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action and the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development and the outcomes of their review conferences and in this context sexual and reproductive health and rights (see Council documents 10914/13 and 11656/13). The EU will continue to be vocal against all forms of violence against women, including sexual violence in conflict, and encourage the UN to be active in this area. The EU will continue to promote UN Security Council resolutions on women, peace and security. The EU will continue to strive towards the eradication of female genital mutilation and build on the successful adoption of resolutions at the Human Rights Council and UN General Assembly on child, early, and forced marriage.
18. The EU will strive to ensure the inclusion of a rights-based approach, encompassing all human rights, and gender equality, in the post-2015 global agenda. The Commission on the Status of Women will focus this year on "Challenges and achievements in the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals for women and girls", and the EU will seize this as a key opportunity to address these issues.
19. Freedom of opinion and expression is a fundamental right of every human being, an essential foundation for democracy, the rule of law and the participation in public affairs, as well as peace, stability and sustainable inclusive development. The EU will work to defend and strengthen the international protection of these rights, offline and online, and pay special attention to the protection of journalists and bloggers.

20. Freedom of association and assembly are key to the realisation of other human rights and cornerstones of democracy, yet civil society is under threat in many countries around the world as a result of legislative and other restrictions. The EU will continue to address restrictions on freedom of association and assembly, as well as intimidation and harassment of human rights defenders and other civil society representatives. The EU, on the 10th anniversary of the EU Guidelines on Human Rights Defenders, is committed to protecting space and promoting a safe, enabling environment for a vibrant civil society.
21. In the same vein, the EU will continue to ensure that the UN General Assembly, the HRC, and the treaty bodies remain an open and safe space for civil society representatives and human rights defenders to present concerns on human rights violations and to contribute to debates in these multilateral fora without fear or restraint. Particularly, in the face of recent incidents of reprisal, the EU will step up its efforts against all forms of harassment, intimidation or persecution of those who cooperate, have cooperated or seek to cooperate with the UN human rights bodies, and will actively support the strengthening of UN monitoring in this regard.
22. As we commemorate the 30th anniversary of the adoption of the UN Convention against torture and other cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment or punishment, the EU will continue to express its strong and principled opposition to torture, which remains a serious global problem. The EU presses for the full and effective implementation of the Convention and calls for a concerted effort to eradicate torture worldwide. The EU will also maintain its support for the UN Special Rapporteur on torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.

23. The EU will remain a staunch and steadfast advocate for human rights for all, including LGBTI persons. Discrimination and violence perpetrated against people based on sexual orientation and gender identity is entirely unacceptable. The EU will proactively engage partners in the promotion of the human rights of LGBTI persons in UN fora.
24. The EU will continue full and constructive engagement with all countries on the fight against racism, a phenomenon that runs counter to the founding principles of the EU and the UN. All men and women are born free and equal in dignity and rights, and the EU firmly believes that the global fight against racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance should be rigorously pursued by the UN.
25. The EU will contribute to the preparations for the high-level event during UNGA69 Ministerial week 2014 also known as the World Conference on Indigenous Peoples, paying particular attention to the full and effective participation of indigenous peoples in this process..
26. As a firm advocate of the universal, indivisible, interdependent and interrelated nature of all human rights, the EU will intensify its efforts to promote and protect economic, social and cultural rights. The EU will contribute to shaping the agenda on economic, social and cultural rights with specific focus on the UN Human Rights Council and in close cooperation with UN Special Rapporteurs covering the respective rights

27. The EU will encourage and contribute to the dissemination and implementation of the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights, which the Human Rights Council endorsed in 2011, including, as appropriate, through participation in relevant debates and workshops at the UN, support to the multi-stakeholder process, contacts with third countries and the development of national action plans.
 28. The United Nations human rights bodies and mechanisms are an important means to advance the human rights agenda and address human rights concerns and violations around the world. The EU will engage countries from all regions and regional organisations to actively support an effective UN human rights system that can foster the realisation of all human rights for all people everywhere.
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