



Council of the  
European Union

Brussels, 26 March 2020  
(OR. en)

7029/20  
ADD 1

COHOM 27  
COPS 100  
RELEX 241  
CFSP/PESC 276  
CONUN 68  
COSCE 1  
DEVGEN 37  
FREMP 26  
JAI 265

#### COVER NOTE

---

From: Secretary-General of the European Commission,  
signed by Mr Jordi AYET PUIGARNAU, Director

date of receipt: 26 March 2020

To: Mr Jeppe TRANHOLM-MIKKELSEN, Secretary-General of the Council of  
the European Union

---

No. Cion doc.: JOIN(2020) 5 final

---

Subject: ANNEX to the JOINT COMMUNICATION TO THE EUROPEAN  
PARLIAMENT AND THE COUNCIL  
EU Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy 2020-2024

---

Delegations will find attached document JOIN(2020) 5 final ANNEX.

---

Encl.: JOIN(2020) 5 final ANNEX



EUROPEAN  
COMMISSION

HIGH REPRESENTATIVE  
OF THE UNION FOR  
FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND  
SECURITY POLICY

Brussels, 25.3.2020  
JOIN(2020) 5 final

ANNEX

**ANNEX**

*to the*

**JOINT COMMUNICATION TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND THE  
COUNCIL**

**EU Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy 2020-2024**

The EU action plan on human rights and democracy 2020 - 2024 sets the level of ambition and defines the priorities of the EU and its Member States in this field in relations with all third countries. Human rights and democracy will be promoted consistently and coherently in all areas of EU external action (e.g. trade, environment, development).

Effective implementation of the objectives set out in the action plan requires **coordinated action** by the EU and Member States, while respecting the distinct institutional roles and competences: the High Representative/Vice-President (HRVP), assisted by the European External Action Service, the European Commission, the Council and the Member States. The EU Special Representative for Human Rights (EUSR) will remain a key political actor and play a central role in guiding implementation of the action plan in order to deliver sustainable progress. The European Parliament has a distinct role and importance in contributing to the promotion of human rights and democracy.

The action plan sets out overarching priorities and objectives of EU human rights policy for the next 5 years. The objectives of the Action Plan will be translated and implemented at all levels: country, regional and multilateral. In operational terms, the **five lines of action** will be implemented on the ground in partner countries.

Over 140 **EU Delegations and Offices** around the world and **Member States Embassies** will be at the forefront of implementation, adapting the priorities and objectives to local circumstances and reporting on results. Within the framework set by the Action Plan, the EU Delegations will work with Member States to define concrete priorities in their countries of operation for a five year period; the work will be backed with **robust financial and political resources**. Programmes and projects at country, regional and global levels, and Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) missions and operations will contribute to achieving the objectives.

Achieving the objectives will require the systematic and coordinated use of the **full range of instruments** at the EU's disposal, including:

- **political, human rights and sectoral policy dialogues** with partner countries and regional organisations;
- dialogue and monitoring missions to implement the EU's **generalised scheme of preferences (GSP)**;
- thematic and geographical instruments under the **2021-2027 multiannual financial framework** (specific project and programme arrangements will depend on the context);
- actions in **multilateral and regional human rights fora**: EU-led thematic and geographical resolutions that address a wide range of human rights issues, support for other relevant resolutions, EU statements and interventions, participation in interactive dialogues, public debates and briefings, events in support of human rights and democracy;
- **speaking up** for human rights and democracy: **public diplomacy and communication** activities, awareness-raising campaigns, public statements and *démarches* condemning human rights violations and abuses, and recognising steps taken to promote and protect human rights;

- observing **trials** of human rights defenders;
- the 13 **EU human rights guidelines**<sup>1</sup> – instruments and tools for EU Delegations and Member States Embassies to advance EU human rights policies;
- election observation and its follow-up;
- regular **dialogue** with civil society, human rights organisations and the business sector;
- cooperation and coordination with **multilateral human rights institutions and United Nations (UN) human rights treaty bodies**.

## I. PROTECTING AND EMPOWERING INDIVIDUALS

Protecting and empowering individuals means ensuring that everyone can fully enjoy civil and political rights, as well as economic, social and cultural rights. Empowering all people ('leaving no-one behind') involves enabling them to realise their full potential as equal and active members of society. The rule of law is the cornerstone of societal cohesion, solidarity and trust, both between the state and citizens, and among citizens.

- ***means of implementation:** political dialogues; human rights dialogues; sectoral policy dialogues, GSP+ / 'everything but arms' (EBA) monitoring missions; use of the relevant EU human rights guidelines with specific tools to achieve thematic objectives; resolutions in the UN Human Rights Council and the UN General Assembly (UNGA) Third Committee; thematic and geographical financial instruments (relevant programmes and projects); direct support for human rights defenders; trial monitoring; advocacy for ratification and implementation of relevant UN and International Labour Organisation (ILO) conventions and optional protocols; statements on human rights abuses and violations; public diplomacy and targeted campaigns, conferences and other events; dialogue with civil society and other non-state actors.*

### A. Protecting people, eliminating inequalities, discrimination and exclusion

- Work towards the worldwide abolition of the death penalty. In countries where the death penalty still exists, insist on the respect of minimum standards and work towards a moratorium on executions as a first step towards abolition.
- Strive to eradicate torture globally through prevention, prohibition, accountability and redress for victims, including by promoting the Global Alliance for Torture-Free Trade.
- Support human rights defenders and their legal representatives, and take account of the impact of their work on their families. Work to ensure positive recognition of the important role played by human rights defenders. Raise individual cases related *inter alia* to land rights, labour rights, natural resources, environmental issues, climate change, and those resulting from corporate abuses.

---

<sup>1</sup> [https://eeas.europa.eu/generic-warning-system-taxonomy/404\\_en/8441/Human%20Rights%20Guidelines](https://eeas.europa.eu/generic-warning-system-taxonomy/404_en/8441/Human%20Rights%20Guidelines).

- Step up action to combat all forms of discrimination including on grounds of sex, race, ethnic or social origin, religion or belief, political or any other opinion, disability, age, sexual orientation, and gender identity, and continue calling on all states to respect, protect and fulfil the human rights of persons belonging to minorities, including national, ethnic, religious and linguistic minorities.
- Advocate for the elimination, prevention and protection from sexual and gender-based violence, including harmful norms and practices such as female genital mutilation, infanticides for girls, and child, early and forced marriage, and discrimination. Encourage the swift ratification and implementation of the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (Istanbul Convention).
- Work towards the full and effective implementation of the Beijing platform for action and the programme of action of the International Conference on Population and Development<sup>2</sup>, and the outcomes of their review conferences, and remain committed to sexual and reproductive health and rights, in this context.
- Step up action to prevent and combat all forms of discrimination against Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Intersex (LGBTI) persons, including LGBTI-phobic violence and hate speech.
- Promote measures to prevent, combat and respond to all forms of violence against children. Assist partner countries in building and strengthening child protection systems. Support the development of quality alternative care and the transition from institution-based to quality family- and community-based care for children without parental care.
- Advocate for the specific protection to which migrants, refugees, and internally displaced and stateless persons are entitled. Support measures to improve integration, social cohesion and access to quality basic services.
- Promote measures to address the high risk of serious impacts of climate change and biodiversity loss on the exercise of human rights, such as the rights to life, health, water, food, housing, and an adequate standard of living, including the plight of climate-induced displaced people.
- Support a human rights-based approach to migration governance and strengthen the capacity of states, civil society and UN partners to implement this approach.

## **B. Empowering people**

- Support state authorities in providing legal identity for all, in particular ensuring universal birth registration.

---

<sup>2</sup>[https://www.un.org/en/development/desa/population/migration/generalassembly/docs/globalcompact/A\\_CONF.177\\_20.pdf](https://www.un.org/en/development/desa/population/migration/generalassembly/docs/globalcompact/A_CONF.177_20.pdf).

- Ensure the meaningful participation of children and youth in decisions that affect them at all levels, including in EU policy-making and implementation.
- Advocate for partner countries to ratify and implement the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. Assist to prevent and remove attitudinal, institutional and environmental barriers. Ensure accessibility to infrastructure, transport, and information and communication technologies (ICT), and ensure inclusive services such as education, including distance learning, healthcare, justice and employment.
- Support indigenous peoples by advocating for their participation in relevant human rights and development processes and by upholding the principle of free, prior and informed consent in all decisions affecting them.

### **C. Promoting fundamental freedoms and strengthening civic and political space**

- Promote a safe and an enabling environment for civil society as actors in their own right, including long-term strategic support to capacity building and meaningful participation of civil society at country, regional and global level.
- Develop tools to detect and respond to early signs of closing civic space and space for civil society, including the use of digital technologies and counter-terrorism measures, building on best practice and support efforts to counter it, as well as tools to monitor opportunities of opening civic space.
- Protect freedom of expression, media freedom and pluralism, online and offline. Raise public awareness and stimulate public debate around actions to counter disinformation
- Contribute to the safety and protection of journalists by condemning attacks. Ensure that those intimidated or threatened receive assistance via the EU human rights defenders protection mechanisms. Support media initiatives and appeal to state authorities to prevent and condemn such violence and take effective measures to end impunity.
- Prevent and act against violations of the freedom of peaceful assembly and association, including where civil society organisations as well as workers and employers are affected.
- Encourage dialogue and the peaceful resolution of political crises and mass protests in compliance with human rights standards. Build the capacity of civil society and political actors to respond to the grievances expressed by spontaneous civic movements.
- Reach out to religious and faith-based actors and assess how they can be involved in peace-making, inter-faith initiatives, reconciliation and mediation, and find synergies with ongoing UN initiatives.
- Support action to protect academic freedom, the autonomy of education institutions, as well as their capacity to provide online and distance learning to persons.

#### **D. Supporting the rule of law and the fair administration of justice**

- Advance the rule of law in partner countries and promote the right to a fair trial to ensure respect for human rights in the administration of justice.
- Improve access to justice and legal assistance, including legal aid, focusing on people living in the most vulnerable situations, including by means of digital technologies.
- Support the establishment of alternative dispute resolution mechanisms as a way to reduce legal, practical and other barriers to justice for victims of human rights violations.
- Support the development of child-friendly justice systems for all children in contact with the law and deprived of liberty.
- Support the improvement, in line with international standards, of the detention conditions and treatment of persons deprived of liberty.

#### **E. Closing the accountability gap, fighting impunity and supporting transitional justice**

- Develop a new horizontal EU global human rights sanctions regime to tackle serious human rights violations and abuses worldwide.
- Develop EU approaches to ensuring accountability, in particular for serious human rights violations and abuses, linking national and international efforts, building on EU policies, e.g. on children and armed conflict, survivors of conflict-related sexual violence, transitional justice, the fight against torture and other ill-treatment, the International Criminal Court.
- Support in-country initiatives to combat impunity for human rights violations and abuses and support transitional justice processes, including by strengthening links with the UN.
- Promote continued political commitment to and operationalisation of the Responsibility to Protect (R2P) by facilitating dialogue and engagement in the UN context and by applying the concept as an analytical tool to specific country situations.<sup>3</sup>
- Counter impunity for all perpetrators involved in trafficking in human beings, with a view to preventing and fully eradicating it. Assist and protect victims, in particular women and children.

#### **F. Reinforcing economic, social, cultural and labour rights**

- Strengthen the linkage between human rights and the environment, including climate change in EU external action. Support activities to raise awareness of the human rights impact of climate change and environmental degradation.

---

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.un.org/en/genocideprevention/about-responsibility-to-protect.shtml>.

- Effectively integrate economic, social, cultural and labour rights in EU human rights dialogues with partner countries, while ensuring synergies with other consultations and GSP+/EBA monitoring missions.
- Promote a zero-tolerance policy on child labour, and the eradication of forced labour, including by supporting partnerships at all levels, labour rights in EU trade relations, the promotion of human rights due diligence in global supply chains and efforts to promote ratification of the ILO Forced Labour Protocol.
- Support the role of public authorities in adopting and ensuring compliance with environmental regulations aimed at securing a safe, clean, healthy and sustainable environment, including by promoting good governance in natural resources management and the rule of law, access to information, public participation in decision-making and access to justice on environmental and climate matters.
- Assist state authorities in developing and implementing laws, regulations and policies on food, land, natural resources, housing and property that uphold human rights.
- Support universal access to safe drinking water and sanitation, and emphasise the human rights dimension in those areas.
- Curb inequalities by promoting non-discriminatory access to social services, including quality and affordable healthcare and education (also online), and build practitioners' capacity to respond to the specific needs of women, men, LGBTI persons, children, persons with disabilities, migrants, refugees and people in vulnerable situations.
- Promote equal access to preventive healthcare and the right to benefit from medical treatment at all times and especially in times of crisis.
- Promote decent work and a human-centred future of work through an updated EU approach ensuring the respect of fundamental principles and rights at work, the right to safe and healthy working conditions, and a world of work free of violence and harassment. Promote social dialogue as well as the ratification and effective implementation of relevant ILO conventions and protocols. Strengthen responsible management in global supply chains and access to social protection.
- Improve the working conditions of migrant workers, including by eradicating all forms of forced labour and exploitation. Empower migrant workers, especially women, and their communities to defend their rights, report, seek justice and organise for advocacy.

## **II. BUILDING RESILIENT, INCLUSIVE AND DEMOCRATIC SOCIETIES**

Respect for human rights is an essential element of resilient, inclusive and democratic societies. Such societies are built on independent media, accountable institutions, representative parliaments and engaged citizens, and provide a safe and enabling environment for civil society and independent media to voice concerns, influence policies, monitor decision-makers and hold them to account.



- *means of implementation: political dialogues; human rights dialogues; electoral observation missions and their follow-up; common security and defence policy (CSDP) civilian and military missions; targeted training for EU staff in Delegations; use of the relevant EU human rights guidelines, with specific tools to achieve thematic objectives; thematic resolutions in the UN Human Rights Council and the UNGA Third Committee; thematic and geographical financial instruments (relevant programmes and projects); advocacy for ratification and implementation of relevant UN conventions and optional protocols; statements on human rights abuses and violations; public diplomacy and targeted campaigns, conferences and other events; dialogue with civil society and other non-state actors.*

#### **A. Enhancing democratic, accountable and transparent institutions**

- Support the separation of powers, independence and impartiality of the judiciary, the efficiency, quality and accountability of the justice system and constitutional safeguards in partner countries.
- Improve the integrity of electoral processes by supporting independent domestic electoral observation and their regional and international networks, and by strengthening the capacity of election management bodies and public administrations.
- Follow up on the recommendations of EU and Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) electoral observation missions, using both political and cooperation tools. Foster a common approach to follow-up in the international observer community, in particular with the African Union and the UN.
- Develop and refine electoral observation methodology to monitor and assess the use of social media and other digital technologies during election campaigns against international standards, in order to prepare for and pre-empt attempts to distort elections.
- Support the development of policy frameworks that apply offline rules on elections and democratic processes to the online context, and assist to build capacities to implement them. Build on the EU's own efforts in this regard, including the action plan against disinformation<sup>4</sup>, the Commission's electoral package<sup>5</sup>, the code of practice on disinformation<sup>6</sup> and the upcoming European Democracy Action Plan.
- Provide comprehensive assistance to prevent and fight against corruption by supporting public administration reform, effective anti-corruption strategies and legal frameworks, including whistle-blowers protection, specialised bodies, parliaments, independent media and civil society, and developing anti-corruption guidelines. Support the ratification and implementation of the UN Convention against Corruption.

---

<sup>4</sup> [https://eeas.europa.eu/sites/eeas/files/action\\_plan\\_against\\_disinformation.pdf](https://eeas.europa.eu/sites/eeas/files/action_plan_against_disinformation.pdf).

<sup>5</sup> [https://ec.europa.eu/info/policies/justice-and-fundamental-rights/eu-citizenship/electoral-rights\\_en#electionsnetwork](https://ec.europa.eu/info/policies/justice-and-fundamental-rights/eu-citizenship/electoral-rights_en#electionsnetwork).

<sup>6</sup> <https://ec.europa.eu/digital-single-market/en/news/code-practice-disinformation>.

- Support parliamentary institutions to increase their capacity to exercise their oversight, legislative and budgetary functions, including through peer-to-peer exchanges.
- Support e-governance initiatives to make the public sector more transparent and accountable, thereby enhancing public trust in governments.

**B. Promoting responsive, inclusive, participatory and representative decision-making**

- Increase the meaningful participation of women and youth, in all their diversity, in all spheres of public life, including by advocating for their inclusion on political parties' lists for winnable seats and building candidates' capacity.
- Increase the capacity of political parties and oversight agencies, especially in conflict-affected and transitional settings. Support cross-party alliances and multi-party dialogue on policy issues of common concern.
- Develop pluralist party systems and political parties' capacities in a non-partisan manner, assisting in the application of international standards on transparent party financing, internal democracy and inclusivity in the selection of candidates and office-holders. Support the development of cross-party codes of conduct aimed at preventing electoral violence and parliaments' capacity to protect and defend human rights and fundamental freedoms.
- Foster the role of civil society in oversight and accountability in both the public and the private sector, promoting the use of online technologies.
- Promote active citizenship and participation in public and political life. Civic education, including via distance learning, and online media literacy action should particularly target women, children, youth, persons with disabilities, persons belonging to minorities, indigenous peoples, and other people in vulnerable situations.

**C. Supporting independent and pluralistic media, access to information and the fight against disinformation**

- Support legislative initiatives on access to information, the right to privacy and personal data protection in line with European and international standards, and their effective implementation.
- Protect media freedom and pluralism by supporting independent media outlets and promoting access to reliable information. Support independent media, investigative journalism and civil society in monitoring governments' performance on governance and compliance with human rights obligations.
- Promote efforts to counter disinformation, hate speech, extremist and terrorist content, including online media literacy and digital skills. Support independent fact-checking and research, investigative reporting and quality journalism, including at local level.

- Promote the principle of open, safe, affordable, accessible and non-discriminatory internet access for all. Combat internet shutdowns, especially in the context of elections and human rights violations.

**D. Reinforcing a human rights and participative approach to conflict prevention and crisis resolution.**

- Support the inclusion of young people (in particular young women) and their participation in all efforts to prevent conflict, and build and sustain peace.
- Build the capacities of grassroots civil society organisations and civic movements to conduct regular monitoring and documentation of human rights violations and abuses, including in conflict situations.
- Continue to strengthen the link between human rights, security and climate change - the latter being an important threat multiplier - in policy dialogues, conflict prevention, development and humanitarian actions, as well as disaster risk reduction strategies.
- Effectively implement the EU's strategic approach to Women, Peace and Security.
- Continue to integrate human rights, and children and armed conflict issues, in all aspects of the EU's response to conflicts and crises, in particular in CSDP mission and operations, mediation, security sector reforms and conflict prevention.
- Intensify efforts to prevent and end grave violations against children affected by armed conflict and support demobilisation, long-term rehabilitation and reintegration also by building on existing UN mechanisms.
- Further strengthen policy coherence between EU human rights and crisis response policies, and actions such as CSDP missions and operations, security sector reforms, EU human rights and democracy country strategies.
- Develop EU human rights due diligence policy to ensure that EU security sector support, including in the context of CSDP missions and operations, is in compliance with human rights law and international humanitarian law, where applicable.
- Continue to provide dedicated IHL modules in training third countries' armed forces through EU military training missions.

**III. PROMOTING A GLOBAL SYSTEM FOR HUMAN RIGHTS AND DEMOCRACY**

Promoting a global system for human rights and democracy is at the core of the EU's commitment to strengthening multilateralism. The EU's strategic response to the changing international environment is to strengthen its coherence and unity in multilateral fora, to widen and deepen bilateral partnerships, and to build new cross-regional coalitions.

- **means of implementation:** *political dialogues; human rights dialogues; sectoral policy dialogues, GSP+/EBA monitoring missions; thematic and geographical resolutions in*

*the UN Human Rights Council and the UNGA Third Committee; thematic and geographical financial instruments (relevant programmes and projects); advocacy for ratification and implementation of relevant UN and ILO conventions and optional protocols; advocacy for increased attention to the impacts of environmental degradation and climate change, on human rights; targeted training for EU staff in Delegations; toolbox: a rights-based approach, encompassing all human rights for EU development cooperation; statements on human rights abuses and violations; démarches; public diplomacy and targeted campaigns, conferences and other events; dialogue with civil society, other non-state actors and the business sector.*

#### **A. Multilateral cooperation**

- Create a more flexible network of partners, including through selective issues-based engagement. Reach out to new partners, prioritise coalition-building with regional groups on selected resolutions, and strengthen links with like-minded countries.
- Engage at an early stage with new members of the UN Human Rights Council that do not support certain country or thematic resolutions.
- Enhance strategic cooperation with the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, both at central level and with field offices.
- Support the efficiency and effectiveness of the UN Human Rights Council and ensure better links with the work of the UNGA Third Committee and synergies with other multilateral human rights fora.
- Support civil society organisations' participation in multilateral human rights fora.

#### **B. Regional partnerships**

- Strengthen the strategic partnership with the Council of Europe (including the Venice Commission) and the OSCE, to enhance coherence and complementarity through selected and diversified cooperation.
- Strengthen regional cooperation with the African Union, the Organisation of American States, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, the Asia-Europe Meeting, the League of Arab States and the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation.
- Support and encourage peer-learning for regional human rights institutions, including human rights courts and independent networks of human rights institutions.

#### **C. Bilateral cooperation**

- Ensure linkages and synergies between the EU's bilateral relations (including political, human rights and sectoral policy dialogues, the monitoring of human and labour rights under the GSP, and work on labour rights under FTAs) and its multilateral relations. Maintain focus on follow-up.

- Identify and follow up on concrete action points for each round of human rights dialogue and consultations with partner countries, taking particular account of GSP+/EBA monitoring objectives in dialogues with GSP beneficiary countries.
- Strengthen the implementation of human rights provisions in EU trade policy, including through the GSP and by promoting labour rights in the context of FTAs. Use the full potential of monitoring mechanisms and further promote transparency, awareness and engagement with stakeholders.
- Make full use of synergies between political and sectoral policy dialogues, including on budget support, to promote human rights, democracy and the rule of law in partner countries.
- Systematically incorporate human rights principles and standards in EU bilateral and regional cooperation, by strengthening and updating the methodology in the toolbox: a rights-based approach, encompassing all human rights for EU development cooperation.<sup>7</sup>

#### **D. Civil society and National Human Rights Institutions**

- Deepen engagement with and enhance support for pluralistic civil society, including human rights defenders, social partners, independent media associations and journalists, academics, legal professionals and humanitarian aid organisations, in order to defend their right to exercise their roles free from any form of intimidation, discrimination or violence.
- Support independent national human rights institutions and commissions, ombudspersons and equality bodies, in line with the Paris and Venice principles, and engage with them in the context of human rights dialogues.
- Promote structured and regular dialogues between state actors, civil society (including social partners) and the international community.
- Support and strengthen long-term partnerships with civil society actors and human rights/social movements, also by making full use of the opportunities to fund grassroots organisations.

#### **E. Business sector**

- Engage with the business sector on upholding and promoting human rights, anti-corruption measures and best practices on corporate social responsibility, due diligence, accountability and access to remedies in a participative manner (e.g. supply chains, zero tolerance for child labour).
- Strengthen engagement, including enhanced coordination between relevant Commission services, European External Action Service, EU Special Representative for Human Rights and Member States, to actively promote and support partner

---

<sup>7</sup> <http://register.consilium.europa.eu/doc/srv?l=EN&f=ST%209489%202014%20INIT>.

countries' efforts to implement the UN guiding principles on business and human rights, including through national action plans and relevant due diligence guidelines.

- Support multi-stakeholder processes to develop, implement and strengthen standards on business and human rights and due diligence, and engage with development banks and international financial institutions. Promote regional projects, peer learning and exchanges of good practice.
- Enhance business engagement in decent job creation, sustainable development and related advocacy work along the supply chain.
- Develop tools and training material on business and human rights, responsible business conduct, private/public-sector dialogue and human rights diligence to enable EU Delegations to step up their engagement on business and human rights.

#### **F. Compliance with international human rights and humanitarian law**

- Strengthen the effectiveness of the UN human rights treaty body system and the ILO standard supervisory mechanism.
- Continue to advocate for and support initiatives to strengthen compliance with international humanitarian law and safeguard humanitarian space.
- Support the International Criminal Court as a cornerstone in fighting impunity and build networks to promote the universality and integrity of the Rome Statute and its principle of complementarity.

### **IV. NEW TECHNOLOGIES: HARNESSING OPPORTUNITIES AND ADDRESSING CHALLENGES**

Digital technologies must be human-centred. New technologies can contribute significantly to the protection and promotion of human rights and democracy, by making public participation easier and more effective, increasing access to public services, facilitating the documentation of violations and abuses, and supporting online activism. However, these technologies can also have a negative impact, such as facilitating access to specific illegal content, which must be countered.

- *means of implementation: political dialogues; human rights dialogues; thematic and geographical financial instruments (relevant programmes and projects); multilateral and regional engagement; targeted training for EU staff in Delegations; public diplomacy and targeted campaigns, conferences and other events; dialogue with civil society, other non-state actors and the business sector.*

#### **A. Capacity-building and effective monitoring**

- Engage with governments, civil society, businesses and UN agencies to consider how to enforce human rights frameworks in the digital age.

- Monitor the possible enabling roles of new technologies, including artificial intelligence (AI), and the challenges that they may pose to human rights and democracies, at international and country level.
- Reinforce exchanges and develop training for EU staff on the use of digital technologies and AI and their impact on human rights and democratic processes.
- Exchange best practices on countering disinformation, hate speech, extremist and terrorist content, including through online media literacy and digital skills.
- Examine regulatory and non-regulatory approaches to ICT as regards promotion of human rights and democracy. Foster international best practice exchanges on human rights compliant tech regulation.

**B. Promoting human rights and democracy in the use of digital technologies, including Artificial Intelligence**

- Support the development, evaluation and implementation of the relevant frameworks and international standards that safeguard human rights and democracy in the digital environment, and consult broadly including with platform providers and civil society. Promote adequate due diligence (including mitigation plans) and effective human rights impact assessment.
- Engage in multi-stakeholder processes that focus on online human rights frameworks.
- Provide capacity-building and other support to enable national authorities to develop and implement relevant international standards effectively in the online space (e.g. protection of children). Engage data scientists and other relevant experts for that purpose. To avoid gaps in protection, national laws and regulations on digital issues should reflect international human rights law.
- Protect the individual's right to privacy and data protection, including in the context of digital space and with respect to disproportionate government access and control. Promote convergence towards a high level of protection taking into account positive examples, such as the General Data Protection Regulation. Promote accession to the Council of Europe Convention on Data Protection.
- Promote EU action, and support global and regional efforts to ensure respect for human rights and democratic principles in the development of AI, building on the EU's own developing approach to ethical AI<sup>8</sup>.
- Intensify efforts to reap the benefits of new technologies for civil society, including online education and distance learning as well as with a particular focus on mitigating risks for human rights defenders.
- Support efforts to protect freedom of expression, media freedom and pluralism in the online environment.

---

<sup>8</sup> See the Commission's White Paper on "Artificial Intelligence – A European approach to excellence and trust", COM(2020) 65 final of 19.2.2020

- Promote the accessibility of technologies for everyone, including persons with disabilities, already at the design stage of new technologies covering all sectors including education.
- Ensure accountability in the use of technology including through lawful access to electronic material constituting evidence.

## V. DELIVERING BY WORKING TOGETHER

This action plan enables the EU to respond to emerging challenges through focused action and coordinated efforts and its implementation and monitoring should be subject to a broad stakeholder dialogue. The EU institutions and Member States will work together to implement it in a joined-up approach each according to their competences under the Treaties, and with exchange of good practices and knowledge. The EU Special Representative for Human Rights (EUSR) is a key political actor and will play a central role in guiding implementation of the action plan in order to deliver sustainable progress. The European Parliament has a distinct role and importance in contributing to the promotion of human rights and democracy. The EU Delegations and Offices and Member States Embassies will play a leading role in protecting human rights and implementing the action plan at country level. Global, EU-based and national civil society organisations are also key partners.

### A. Implementation and evaluation

- Track progress in meeting the objectives of this action plan, in full consideration of the sustainable development goals, in particular through the thematic part of the EU annual report on *Human rights and democracy in the world*. Adjust the structure of the report to reflect the implementation of priority actions.
- Conduct a mid-term review of the implementation of the action plan.
- Organise regular exchanges of views in the Council on best practices and EU institutions' and Member States' progress in implementing the action plan, *inter alia* in the context of discussions on the implementation of the EU human rights guidelines.
- Ensure that the human rights and democracy country strategies reflect the priority actions of the action plan, taking account of the country specific context.
- Follow up on European Parliament resolutions and debates that are relevant for the implementation of the action plan.
- Regularly engage with civil society on the overall implementation of the action plan and organise a dedicated annual consultation.
- Broaden the scope of the updated toolbox: a rights-based approach, encompassing all human rights for EU development cooperation, by applying it to all EU external action programmes and further developing joint rights-based approach initiatives with Member States, including through joint programming.



## **B. Public diplomacy and strategic communication**

- Build effective social media networks for deeper engagement, content-sharing and endorsement by influencers in order to raise awareness and drive opinion change.
- Communicate on relevant policies and initiatives, taking account of public perceptions and local languages, taking a campaign-style thematic approach.
- Identify means to measure the effectiveness of public diplomacy and campaigns, and develop the most successful content and channels for interaction with the public.
- Identify and further promote good human rights stories and harness their potential for facilitating further positive human rights changes on the ground.