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FREMP 151
COHOM 119

NOTE

From: Presidency
To: Delegations

Subject: WP FREMP-COHOM meeting of 5 November 2019 :Presidency
Discussion paper

With a view to the FREMP-COHOM meeting on 5 November, delegations will find attached a Presidency discussion paper

EU2019.FI

22.10.2019

FREMP-COHOM joint meeting: independent governmental bodies for the promotion and protection of fundamental and human rights

Time: 5.11.2019 15:00-18:00

Independent human rights bodies, such as national human rights institutions (NHRIs), equality bodies, ombuds institutions and data protection authorities, play a crucial role in the protection and promotion of fundamental rights and human rights. National human rights bodies can take many forms but they share certain common features, the most important of which is a strong mandate to promote fundamental rights and human rights at the national level. Ensuring the independence and autonomy as well as sufficient resources for these bodies is crucial. At the same time, governments and international organisations should find novel ways to cooperate with these bodies and utilise their extensive expertise when developing policies for the promotion of fundamental and human rights.

The Council Conclusions on the Charter of Fundamental Rights after 10 Years, adopted on 7 October, underline the necessity of safeguarding an enabling environment for NHRIs, equality bodies and other human rights mechanisms. In addition, the Conclusions encourage Member States, the Commission, the Fundamental Rights Agency and other Union institutions, bodies and agencies to further enhance their cooperation with these mechanisms and to support them in their respective mandates, including the implementation and promotion of the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights.

The EU Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy 2015-2019 emphasises co-operation with local institutions and mechanisms, including national human rights institutions, in the promotion of human rights and democracy. Actions in this field include supporting, strengthening and

engaging with NHRIs and other mechanisms as well as strengthening NHRI-involvement in consultative processes at the national level, including in Human Rights Dialogues.

Considering the importance of national bodies both in the internal and external policies on fundamental rights and human rights by the Union and its Member States, FREMP and COHOM delegates are invited to discuss how cooperation and capacity building of national bodies as well as coherence of internal and external action in this area could be further strengthened.

Format of the meeting

In the meeting, EEAS, the Commission, FRA, Equinet and ENNHRI will each give a presentation on the theme of the meeting from their perspective, followed by a Q&A with delegations. After the presentations, COHOM and FREMP delegates will exchange views on the topic in a closed session.

Guiding questions for the discussion:

- What are the key components for creating an *enabling environment* for independent governmental bodies promoting fundamental rights and human rights at different levels?
- What are the *benefits of engaging* with independent governmental bodies promoting fundamental rights and human rights at different levels?
- What *best practices are there for cooperation* with independent bodies a) at the national level b) in internal and external action of the Union?
- How could these *best practices be replicated* at different levels and in different policy sectors?
- How can we *better ensure coherence in EU's approach* to independent bodies in internal policies and external action?