



EUROPEAN UNION

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EU statement – Plenary session 7 Tolerance and Non-Discrimination II

1. Against the backdrop of Russia's unprovoked, unjustified and illegal war of aggression against Ukraine, the OSCE commitments on combating all forms of intolerance and discrimination, and protecting the human rights and fundamental freedoms of all persons in full equality before the law are more relevant than ever. The EUMS remain resolute to their full implementation, holding them to be crucial to regional peace and stability. We thank the speakers and reiterate our full support to the autonomy and mandate of the autonomous institutions.
2. Early warning and seeking early action with regard to tensions involving persons belonging to national minorities is central to the OSCE concept of comprehensive security. We underline the crucial role of the HCNM's mandate and the importance of the effective implementation of OSCE commitments and legislation on the protection of human rights, including those of persons belonging to national minorities, and their non-discriminatory treatment throughout the territory of participating States.
3. We condemn Russia's false narrative and misuse of minority issues to justify its military aggression against Ukraine. The Russian Federation is obliged by international law to observe human rights, including those of persons belonging to national minorities, in all territories temporarily under its illegal military control or held by Russia-backed armed formations, as well as within its own territory.
4. In Belarus, the peoples' will to live in a democratic country was met with brutal repression, and increasing human rights violations. Those demanding free and fair elections are labelled "extremists" and, following the recent amendments to the Criminal Code, may even be charged with the death penalty. The persons belonging to the Polish, Lithuanian

and other national minorities in Belarus, as well as independent political parties, associations or trade unions, have also become a target.

5. In face of the continuous refugee flow, caused by Russia's war of aggression, the EU tested its mechanisms, putting forward a comprehensive response. In full solidarity towards Ukraine and its people, the EU and its MS offered protection to the refugees, with a clear legal status and access to education, healthcare, as well as the labour market.
6. This approach has been consistent with the EU and its MS commitment to protect and promote the rights of refugees, displaced persons and migrants, paying particular attention to children, women and to other persons in vulnerable situations. The EU Charter of Fundamental Rights reaffirms that fundamental freedoms and human rights are guaranteed equally to all persons residing in EU countries regardless of their status. Moreover, the EU has focused on ensuring protection in humanitarian crises, facilitating access to international protection, breaking the business model of traffickers and smuggling networks, including instrumentalization, and to tackling the root causes of irregular migration. In addition, successful integration of migrant workers in societies where they are lawfully residing, has also been at the forefront of EUs action, contributing to the enhancement of stability and cohesion.
7. With the number of forcibly displaced persons increasing in recent years, ensuring tolerance and non-discrimination has become a more pressing challenge, including within the OSCE region. EU's relevant policies are founded on the principles of non-discrimination, solidarity and responsibility, as well as non-refoulement.
8. In this sense, the EUMS are also committed to ensuring a non-discriminatory treatment of Roma and Sinti persons, including those displaced in the context of Russia's war of aggression, and preventing stereotyping and segregation. We commend the work of civil society providing assistance to Roma refugees, as well as the support by ODIHR.
9. As we are marking this year the 20th anniversary of the *OSCE Action Plan on Improving the Situation of Roma and Sinti within the OSCE Area*, we believe that we need to strengthen our efforts to implement the existing OSCE commitments. Despite the progress partly achieved in legislation and policies across the OSCE, more needs to be done to eradicate discrimination and bring about equality of opportunities.

The Candidate Countries NORTH MACEDONIA*, MONTENEGRO*, ALBANIA*, UKRAINE, the REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA, and BOSNIA and HERZEGOVINA*, and the EFTA countries ICELAND and LIECHTENSTEIN, members of the European Economic Area, as well as ANDORRA and SAN MARINO align themselves with this statement.

* North Macedonia, Montenegro, Albania, and Bosnia and Herzegovina continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.