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*Draft EU Annual Report on
Human Rights and Democracy in the
World in 2014*

THEMATIC PART

Preface

Overview

In 2014 the EU remained committed to promoting respect for human rights across the world and advocating compliance with international humanitarian law. The EU Strategic Framework and Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy¹, adopted in June 2012, have continued to be the reference documents for EU external policy in this area, setting out the guiding principles and main priorities for EU action. These documents aim to improve the effectiveness and consistency of the EU's human rights policy and to place human rights and democracy at the core of the Union's external action. The current Action Plan expired at the end of 2014.

During the reporting period the External Action Service (EEAS) launched a broad process of consultation with other EU institutions (Commission, Council and the European Parliament), Member States and relevant stakeholders (including in particular civil society organisations and academic institutions) to assess the main achievements of the 2012/2014 Action Plan and prepare a new one. An internal assessment by the EEAS and Commission services confirmed that the 2012/2014 Action Plan provided important leverage for the engagement of all EU actors, and helped to mainstream human rights considerations into the full range of EU external policies. It also encouraged the institutions and stakeholders collectively to address human rights challenges in a more systematic way, and contributed to enhancing EU visibility and accountability. Under the Action Plan, the EU streamlined its procedures (for instance through the establishment of human rights focal points in EU delegations), established good practices and developed innovative tools, such as the human rights country strategies.

¹ See Council of the European Union, *EU Strategic Framework and Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy*, 11855/12, 25 June 2012.

Human rights throughout EU policy

In 2014, the EU Special Representative on Human Rights (EUSR), Stavros Lambrinidis, completed the second year of his mandate. The EUSR works under the authority of the High Representative/Vice-President (HR/VP) and the guidance of the Council's Political and Security Committee (PSC) ambassadors, and in coordination with the EEAS, the Commission services and the European Parliament.

His core task, as defined in his mandate, is to increase the coherence, effectiveness and visibility of human rights in EU foreign policy. To this end, he focused on strengthening the EU's human rights engagement with strategic partners, including through visits to the United States, Brazil and Mexico; building relations with countries in transition and regional partners, including Myanmar, Pakistan and Egypt; upgrading the EU's visibility and engagement with multilateral and regional human rights mechanisms; and cooperating with and empowering civil society. He also focused on promoting key EU priorities, in particular those reflected in EU human rights guidelines and on other issues such as freedom of expression offline and online, women's human rights, a human rights based approach to development, work against torture, abolition of the death penalty, and business and human rights.

Through his work, including over a dozen ministerial level meetings on human rights, with China, Bahrain, the DPRK and South Africa amongst others, and contacts with hundreds of key stakeholders, the EUSR endeavoured to support the important work of existing EU and Member State human rights structures and to create conditions for further in-depth dialogue and results-orientated engagement with foreign governments, international organisations, and civil society throughout the world.

The EEAS has also worked on streamlining its internal mechanisms and procedures, with a view to making its action in the area of human rights more effective. Thanks to the concerted work of EU delegations, Heads of Mission, EU institutions, and Member States, 132 human rights country strategies have been endorsed by the Political and Security Committee (PSC). The implementation of the human rights country strategies has resulted in more intense collaboration between the EU delegations and Member States' embassies on human rights and has led to the better structured, more coherent human rights dialogues.

In 2014, the EU held formal human rights dialogues and consultations with 37 partner countries and regional groupings, including - for the first time - a human rights dialogue with Myanmar/Burma. In addition, many of the 79 African, Caribbean and Pacific countries that are party to the Cotonou Agreement conducted a dialogue with the EU. On the negative side, the human rights dialogue with Russia was suspended and the one with Azerbaijan postponed. The EU continued its efforts to improve the impact and effectiveness of the dialogues, including by establishing links between them and other policy instruments, developing follow-up mechanisms and covering individual cases in the discussions. Most human rights dialogues were preceded by consultation meetings with civil society organisations (CSOs) in Brussels and in the countries concerned, and were followed by debriefings. The EU continued to take a position publicly on human rights issues by means of statements delivered by the HR/VP or her spokesperson. Confidential démarches were also used throughout the year for more sensitive cases.

The EEAS provided regular training sessions on human rights and democracy. A mapping exercise of human rights training programmes run by Member States was also launched with the objective of having an overview of best practices and exploring possible synergies. In September 2014 it was agreed that an informal network of focal points for human rights and democracy training in EU Member States would be established. In an effort to ensure that human rights issues are an integral part of EU delegations' work, all delegations and CSDP missions and operations had designated human rights and/or gender focal points by the end of 2014. The Council Working Party on Human Rights (COHOM), in charge of all human rights aspects of the external relations of the European Union, adopted the EU's strategic priorities in UN human rights fora for the year, which contributed to the successful outcome of EU efforts in the UN framework.

Efforts were reinforced in 2014 to address issues of coherence and consistency between the EU's internal and external human rights policies. Specific conclusions were adopted by the Council in June which recognised the importance of consistency for the EU's credibility in its external relations, and in order to lead by example in the area of human rights. In 2014, the European Commission remained committed to incorporating human rights in its impact assessments for proposals in the field of EU external action. To this end, specific guidelines on the analysis of human rights impact assessments in trade agreements were developed in 2014.

Implementing EU human rights priorities

Throughout 2014 the EU focused on specific thematic human rights challenges in terms of both civil and political rights and economic, social and cultural rights.

The EU was active in promoting the right to freedom of association and peaceful assembly, through public statements, in the framework of its bilateral relations with third countries, and through human rights dialogues and consultations with like-minded partners. In September 2014, the EU organised an event in the margins of the OSCE Human Dimension Implementation Meeting to examine - together with civil society - recent trends in the enjoyment of freedom of peaceful assembly in the OSCE area.

At the UN Human Rights Council (HRC) sessions and during the UN General Assembly Third Committee meeting in October, the EU underlined the importance of the work of civil society organisations and human rights defenders. It expressed concern about the shrinking space for civil society in many countries, the increasing restrictions placed upon non-governmental organisations and the harassment and severe human rights violations inflicted upon activists. The European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights² (EIDHR) remained a key financial tool to support civil society organisations active on human rights, and also human rights defenders, including journalists and bloggers.

In May 2014, in line with the EU's determination to continue to promote freedom of opinion and expression online and offline, the Council adopted human rights guidelines on this topic. Building upon existing instruments and documents, these guidelines recall key principles and contain clearly defined priorities and tools for the use of EU delegations and Member States' embassies, as well as EU headquarters, in order to better promote and defend this right. The EU repeatedly condemned attacks against journalists and bloggers through public statements and in the framework of its bilateral relations. In September 2014, the EU organised a side event on freedom of expression online in the margins of the Human Dimension Implementation Meeting, organised by the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights in Warsaw. The 2014 annual EU NGO Human Rights Forum, held in December 2014, dedicated to the protection and promotion of freedom of expression, saw the participation of more than 200 NGO representatives from all over the world and resulted in the adoption of a number of recommendations which will guide EU action in this crucial area.

² Regulation (EU) No 235/2014 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 March 2014 establishing a financing instrument for democracy and human rights worldwide
OJ L 77, 15.3.2014, p. 85–94 <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?qid=1429276632832&uri=CELEX:32014R0235>

The EU reaffirmed its opposition to the death penalty and used all diplomatic tools at its disposal to advance the cause of worldwide abolition, in line with the relevant EU guidelines. Through extensive lobbying and outreach, the EU actively participated in the cross-regional alliance promoting the UN General Assembly Resolution ultimately adopted in December, reaffirming the call for a moratorium on the use of the death penalty. Thanks to the EU's outreach efforts the resolution, co-sponsored by 95 States, obtained an unprecedented number of 117 votes in favour, 37 against and 34 abstentions, a significant improvement compared to similar resolutions in previous years.

In December 2014 the EU celebrated the 30th anniversary of the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, at an event in Brussels. The EU encouraged all countries to ratify and implement the Convention and its Optional Protocol and actively supported the establishment of independent monitoring mechanisms. In addition, the issue of torture and ill-treatment as well as individual cases were systematically raised during human rights dialogues with third countries and during visits. In parallel, the EU continued to implement the Guidelines on Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment. The EU remains committed to supporting human rights defenders (HRDs) who play a vital role in the promotion and protection of human rights. EU foreign ministers reiterated this commitment in Council conclusions, adopted in June, to mark the 10th anniversary of the adoption of the EU guidelines on human rights defenders. The Council emphasised the particularly important role of women HRDs and HRDs from vulnerable and marginalised groups. In May, EU delegations were provided with detailed guidance on the implementation of the guidelines on human rights defenders, setting out best practices for handling cases. Throughout the year, EU delegations were active in working to protect human rights defenders who face increasing pressure from the authorities and from non-state actors in many countries. EU diplomats monitored trials, visited detained activists and issued statements on individual cases.

This year the EU celebrated the 25th anniversary of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. To mark this anniversary and the EU's commitment to children in its internal and external policies, the Council adopted conclusions on the promotion and protection of children's rights in December. The EU actively supported the campaign "Children, Not Soldiers" jointly initiated by the UN Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict and UNICEF, which aims to prevent the recruitment and ultimately end the use of children by government armed forces in conflict by 2016. In line with ILO Convention 182 on the worst forms of child labour, the EU advocated the establishment of hazardous work lists in 33 countries to protect children from dangerous work in sub-Saharan Africa and Europe/Central Asia. During human rights dialogues with certain countries there was a particular focus on child labour.

The protection of the rights of women and the fight against gender-based violence remained high on the EU agenda. These issues were consistently mainstreamed in EU programmes and were included in public messages and dialogues with governments, regional organisations and civil society.

Support for women human rights defenders and women's organisations was also a priority. The UN continued to be the main platform in which the EU advances its strategic priorities in the area of gender. For example, the EU played an important role in the negotiation of the Agreed Conclusions of the UN Commission on the Status of Women. The EU and UN Women continued to implement their 2012 Joint Memorandum of Understanding (MoU). Key achievements were made in the fields of communication, policy dialogue and joint advocacy, and the training and planning of joint EU–UN Women programmes. In this context, the conference "Spring Forward for women", bringing together women parliamentarians from the Arab States region and members of the European Parliament, took place in Brussels in November 2014. As regards sexual violence in conflict, the EU actively participated in the Global Summit in June 2014 in London, and made a commitment to follow up with practical action in the areas of human rights, conflict prevention, crisis management, mediation, and humanitarian assistance. During the Girl Summit in July the EU pledged more than EUR 100 million for the next seven years to gender equality and children's wellbeing, including concrete projects on ending female genital mutilation and child, early and forced marriage.

As regards the enjoyment of human rights by lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTI) persons, the EU engaged in dialogue with several countries and when necessary undertook the necessary diplomatic démarches, particularly in Africa and Central Asia, to invite countries to reconsider or repeal legislation that discriminates against LGBTI persons or infringes internationally agreed non-discrimination provisions. In addition, the EU advocated LGBTI rights in the relevant human rights dialogues and, through the funding instrument EIDHR, provided support to LGBTI human rights defenders and to NGOs implementing projects to fight discrimination against LGBTI persons. The EU was actively engaged in multilateral efforts, in particular within the UN, to tackle discrimination, including on the basis of sexual orientation or gender identity. At the Human Rights Council in Geneva the EU actively and successfully contributed to the adoption of the human rights, sexual orientation and gender identity (SOGI) resolution in September.

One year after the adoption of the EU guidelines on freedom of religion or belief (FoRB), the EU continued to focus on this fundamental freedom, which is increasingly facing challenges worldwide. In the light of the atrocities and abuses of basic human rights inflicted on people belonging to religious minorities and vulnerable groups, especially in Iraq and Syria, the EU took action, including at multilateral level, to emphasise the need to safeguard the multi-ethnic and multi-religious character of those countries. The EU focused on consolidating FoRB resolutions both in the UN HRC and in the General Assembly. In the March 2014 HRC session, the EU-led resolution on FoRB was once again adopted by consensus.

The EU contributed to the promotion and protection of the rights of persons belonging to minorities by joining forces with the United Nations and other international and multilateral organisations such as the OSCE and the Council of Europe. In September 2014, the first ever UN World Conference on Indigenous Peoples was held in New York as a high-level plenary of the General Assembly. The EU contributed actively to preparations for the conference by supporting the participation of indigenous peoples and by providing coordinated contributions towards the adoption by consensus of an outcome document. The EU also organised a side event on monitoring indigenous peoples' rights. Building upon the results of the conference, the EU started work on a strengthened EU policy on indigenous peoples, as envisaged in the EU Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy.

The EU is a party to the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD). In line with the Convention, the EU is committed to promoting the rights of persons with disabilities in its internal as well as external action. In 2014, the European Commission prepared the first EU report to the UN as required under the CRPD. The report describes how the EU has been implementing the CRPD through legislation, policy actions and funding instruments.

As an advocate of the universal, indivisible, interdependent and interrelated nature of all human rights, the EU considers that economic, social and cultural rights (ESCR) are part and parcel of its external human rights policy. During the year, the EU paid increased attention to this area during human rights dialogues with key partner countries. At multilateral level, the EU actively supported and cooperated with several UN Special Rapporteurs working on ESCR.

In 2014 the EU continued to implement and promote the 2011 UN Guiding Principles (UNGPs) on Business and Human Rights. In the EU, the Directive on disclosure of non-financial and diversity information by large companies and groups was adopted in September, a considerable step forward in facilitating actions responding to responsible business conduct.. Companies concerned will disclose information on policies, risks and outcomes as regards respect for human rights among other things. As part of its external action, the EU discussed the issue with a growing number of partner countries. At the June session of the HRC, the EU supported the resolution renewing the mandate of the Working Group on Human Rights and Transnational Corporations and other Enterprises. In September 2014, a joint seminar in Addis Ababa, where the African Union and the EU took the commitment to jointly promote and implement the UNGPs in the two regions and to work on areas of potential cooperation.

Human rights in all external policies

In 2014, the EU remained committed to promoting human rights and democracy through all its external actions. Further steps were taken towards applying a more effective human rights-based approach to development cooperation.

In 2014 the EU continued to shape its position and strategy for the follow-up to Rio+20 and the post-2015 development agenda. In a number of policy statements, endorsed by the Council, the EU was an advocate for integrating human rights, rule of law and good governance issues into the global development agenda. In its most recent December conclusions the Council emphasised the importance of a post-2015 agenda encompassing all human rights.

The EU also worked to develop a trade policy that is fully compatible with human rights. In this context, under the new GSP Regulation³ (generalised tariff preferences) which entered into force in January 2014, 14 countries have been granted GSP+ preferences. In addition, the EU promoted action at multilateral level to ensure controls on exports of surveillance technology which could be used for human rights violations. In early 2014, the Commission submitted a proposal to the Council and the European Parliament to amend Regulation (EC) No 1236/2005 on trade in goods that could be used for capital punishment and torture.

In 2014, the EU took additional steps to mainstream its human rights and gender policies in CSDP missions and operations. In line with the 2013 Crisis Management Procedures⁴, human rights and gender considerations were addressed during the planning process for new missions and operations. An analysis of the human rights and gender situation was integrated into planning documents, including for the EU Advisory Mission for Civilian Security Sector Reform Ukraine⁵ and EUFOR Central African Republic⁶. In 2014, advisers or focal points for human rights and gender in all CSDP missions and operations were appointed. Their tasks include both mainstreaming human rights and gender into the work of the mission or operation, and implementing specific activities. The conflict Early Warning System (EWS), which includes many human rights-related indicators, was gradually rolled out at global level during the year. The EU continued to advance its commitment to the implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security both internally, via the EU Member States' Informal Taskforce, and externally, in promoting the development of national action plans with third countries. The second report on the EU indicators for the comprehensive approach to the EU implementation of the resolutions was published in January 2014.

³ http://trade.ec.europa.eu/doclib/docs/2012/october/tradoc_150025.pdf

⁴ <http://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-7660-2013-REV-2/en/pdf>

⁵ http://www.eeas.europa.eu/csdp/missions-and-operations/euam-ukraine/index_en.htm

⁶ http://eeas.europa.eu/csdp/missions-and-operations/eufor-rca/index_en.htm

In its efforts to entrench human rights issues in its counter-terrorism activities, the EEAS, in cooperation with the EU institutions, drew up counterterrorism guidance to be applied in the planning and implementation of counter-terrorism assistance projects with third countries. Endorsed by Member States in November, the guidance takes into account international humanitarian law and international refugee law.

Democracy and the rule of law

In 2014, the EU pursued its efforts to support democratic reforms and values by supporting electoral processes across the world. To this end, the Commission deployed election observation missions and electoral expert missions. Technical and financial assistance was also provided to election management bodies and to domestic observers. Overall, eight election observation missions to observe nine elections were deployed in total. While the EU does not observe elections in the OSCE area, it closely supported OSCE/ODIHR in the context of the presidential and parliamentary elections in Ukraine.

In general, the EU stepped up its work on democracy support, with the objective of increasing coherence between EU instruments and EU Member States' activities, and forging a common understanding of the local context, through reinforced partnership with all stakeholders, including government and civil society. In this context, the EU identified 12 EU delegations for a second generation of democracy support pilot work in March 2014, and work started in June. As from 2014, some funding from the EIDHR is supporting the pilot exercise.

Promoting universality, working at multilateral and regional levels

The EU continued to pay particular attention to promoting the universality of human rights, in its statements and explanations of votes as well as public events and conferences and in its publications. In its bilateral contacts, including in human rights dialogues, the EU regularly encouraged third countries to ratify and implement the UN human rights instruments and to reconsider or withdraw their reservations.

During 2014, the EU remained active in the field of transitional justice, engaging in countries in transition through mediation activities, political dialogues and CSDP missions. A draft EU policy on transitional justice is under development and is likely to be adopted in early 2015, which will show publicly the EU's commitment to transitional justice, strengthen the coherence and consistency of the EU's engagement on transitional justice and provide guidance to EU and EU Member State staff working on transitional justice issues.

During 2014, the EU continued to implement the Guidelines on International Humanitarian Law (IHL) and to support the dissemination of IHL to all warring parties, including armed non-state actors. The EU continued to enhance its advocacy for compliance with international humanitarian law in the framework of humanitarian aid. The EU and its Member States supported the Swiss/International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) Initiative on Strengthening Compliance with IHL and reconfirmed their commitment to promoting compliance with IHL by all states and non-state actors involved in conflict situations by attending the Conference of High Contracting Parties to the Fourth Geneva Convention convened on 17 December in Geneva. The Commission continued to provide financial support to a project enhancing the ICRC's capacity to provide IHL training and dissemination for military/security forces and armed non-state actors in key countries affected by conflict, namely Iraq, Colombia and the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

For the first time, on the basis of the 2006 Agreement between the International Criminal Court (ICC) and the EU on cooperation and assistance, a joint EU-ICC roundtable was set up to consult and to ensure regular exchanges on matters of mutual interest, including cooperation, complementarity, diplomatic support and mainstreaming, as well as public information and outreach.

The EU also continued efforts and outreach to encourage additional countries to ratify the Rome Statute. The EU maintained its systematic *démarche* campaigns in support of the ICC, and its policy of including ICC clauses in agreements with third countries. Likewise, cooperation with UN mechanisms and bodies (Universal Periodic Review, Special Rapporteurs and Treaty Bodies) and implementation of their recommendations have now become standard elements of the EU's bilateral engagement on human rights with third countries. In its bilateral contacts, the EU also routinely encourages third countries to extend a standing invitation to UN special rapporteurs.

The EU continued to lend its full support to the multilateral human rights system. Throughout the year the EU delegation coordinated the positions of the EU and its Member States at the Third Committee of the United Nations General Assembly, the United Nations Human Rights Council and UN specialised agencies. 2014 was another busy year for the Human Rights Council, with the EU playing an active and pivotal role, particularly in relation to country resolutions and thematic issues such as freedom of religion or belief and rights of the child. It also participated fully in dialogues and negotiations on other topics, presenting a united front on most resolutions.

The EU pursued its close cooperation with the Council of Europe in 2014. In line with the 2007 Memorandum of Understanding, both organisations maintained regular contacts at both political and working levels, with cooperation on human rights, the rule of law and democratisation issues being at the heart of their relationship. The EU remained a major supporter of and strong contributor to the work of the OSCE in 2014. The EU continued to actively support the OSCE's efforts to address security challenges in the OSCE region through all three of its dimensions: the politico-military dimension, the economic and environmental dimension and the human dimension.

I Human rights and democracy throughout EU policy

Incorporation of human rights in all impact assessments

When the EU Action Plan for Human Rights and Democracy was adopted in 2012, the European Commission committed itself to incorporating human rights in its impact assessments (IAs) for legislative and non-legislative proposals, implementing measures, and trade agreements that have significant economic, social and environmental impacts or define future policies. The methodology used builds on the guidance developed by Commission services for analysing the impact on fundamental rights in IAs⁷.

For trade and investment agreements, an impact assessment is carried out before the Commission proposes to open negotiations. During the negotiation process, a more detailed sustainability impact assessment (SIA) is also conducted for all major trade negotiations. Since 2011, an analysis of potential human rights impacts is systematically included in all trade IAs and SIAs. In 2014, final reports which include an analysis of the potential impact on human rights were published for SIAs covering the Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreements with Egypt and Jordan.

Furthermore, an ex-post evaluation of the EU-Mexico Free Trade Agreement is ongoing. It will include an analysis of impact on human rights, and this will become the norm for future ex post evaluations of the EU's trade agreements.

To standardise the assessment of the human rights impact of trade and investments initiatives, in 2014 the European Commission developed specific guidelines on this topic.

⁷ "Operational Guidance on taking account of Fundamental Rights in Commission Impact Assessments" of 2011 (SEC(2011)567 final). http://ec.europa.eu/smart-regulation/impact/key_docs/docs/sec_2011_0567_en.pdf

According to the European Investment Bank (EIB) Statement of Environmental and Social Principles and Standards, the EIB “restricts its financing to projects that respect human rights”. The revised EIB Environmental and Social Handbook, issued in January 2014, aims to promote robust, human-rights-responsive due diligence processes. It outlines the Bank’s approach to due diligence for all operations in all regions throughout the project cycle, effectively integrating human rights. 2014 marked the first year of the revised Standards’ application. In the course of 2015, the Bank intends to assess their effectiveness in responding to human rights considerations at the level of investments.

Partnership with civil society (including freedom of association and assembly)

In 2014, the EU continued to strengthen its interaction with civil society, both as a key partner consulted on key EU human rights policy developments, and as a beneficiary of political and financial support. The EU has made it systematic practice to hold consultations with civil society in Brussels and in partner countries before human rights dialogues⁸, and to carry out debriefings afterwards (see section 32). Likewise, civil society was consulted on several policy developments, including on the elaboration or revision of guidelines, and in the preparation of the human rights country strategies, locally and/or at EU headquarters. Civil society representatives regularly engage with the Council Working Party on Human Rights (COHOM) and are systematically debriefed on its conclusions. Finally, in October 2014 the Commission organised the second global Policy Forum on Development in Brussels, bringing together more than 140 representatives from civil society organisations, local authorities, Member States and the EU institutions. The framework for enabling civil society was on the agenda and participants agreed on the need to deepen knowledge and monitor progress. Policy forums and dialogues were complemented by many technical meetings with CSOs throughout the year, in which the EU shared information on activities and policies and facilitated access to funding and support.

⁸ In addition, ad hoc civil society organisation (CSO) seminars were organised in the framework of the human rights dialogues with Colombia, Chile, the Kyrgyz Republic, Brazil, Mexico, Republic of Moldova, Myanmar/Burma, South Africa and Tajikistan.

The EU Global Approach to Migration and Mobility (GAMM), the overarching framework for the EU's external migration and mobility policy, highlights the role of civil society in its implementation. CSOs are systematically engaged in migration dialogues as well as in the specific cooperation frameworks and mobility partnerships, and will be included in the future common agendas for migration and mobility. Similarly, the EU Strategy towards the Eradication of Trafficking in Human Beings 2012-2016^[1] highlights the role of civil society organisations, and their participation in national and transnational referral mechanisms. More specifically, the EU strategy provides for the establishment of an EU platform of CSOs and service providers working on protection and assistance for trafficking victims, both in Member States and in selected third countries.

The 16th annual EU-NGO Human Rights Forum, held in Brussels on 4 and 5 December 2014, focused on the issue of freedom of expression online and offline. The forum, which was opened by the EU Special Representative for Human Rights, was attended by over 200 civil society participants from around the world, along with representatives from international and regional human rights mechanisms, and officials from EU institutions and Member States. The forum was a key occasion for civil society to discuss and provide input into the EU's policies in this area, including the EU's efforts to ensure effective implementation of the guidelines, the EU's support for the role of human rights defenders (HRDs), the EU response to the worsening environment for HRDs, and the trend towards restrictive NGO laws and practices in an increasing number of countries.

[1] http://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/doc_centre/crime/docs/trafficking_in_human_beings_eradication-2012_2016_en.pdf

The EUSR for Human Rights has continued to underscore the EU's support for a vibrant and robust civil society on many occasions throughout the year, including during country visits and human rights dialogues. As 2014 marked the 10th anniversary of the EU guidelines on human rights defenders, the EUSR endeavoured to raise the profile of all those defending human rights around the world, as well as of the important work carried out by EU delegations and Member States' embassies on the ground, at a number of events. The EUSR also met hundreds of representatives of international and local NGOs and human rights defenders both in Brussels and during his official visits. He also continued to address concerns on the crackdown against human rights defenders and draft NGO laws by engaging extensively with government officials, civil society, parliamentarians and human rights institutions in countries he visited throughout the year.

Throughout 2014, following the commitment reflected in the EU Strategic Framework on Human Rights and Democracy, the freedom of association and peaceful assembly remained one of the implementing priorities on human rights for the EU. The EU condemned unjustified restrictions on those rights in several public statements (for example before the 4 September 2014 meeting of the OSCE in Vienna, when the EU called on Russia to fully abide by its international commitments to respect the freedom of peaceful assembly and association). The EU also raised this issue in a number of bilateral human rights dialogues with partner countries.

In 2014, Council conclusions in February and EU statements at the September session of the Human Rights Council and at the UN General Assembly also repeatedly mentioned the EU's concerns about freedom of association in Egypt. Throughout the year, at UN Human Rights Council sessions and also during the UN General Assembly Third Committee meeting in October, the EU also underlined the importance of the work of civil society organisations and human rights defenders. It expressed concern about the shrinking space for civil society in many countries, the increasing restrictions placed upon non-governmental organisations and the harassment and severe human rights violations inflicted upon activists. The EU also stood up for the speaking rights of NGOs and other stakeholders at the UN Human Rights Council itself and resisted obstructions to the participation of NGOs in conferences and other UN meetings.

The EU has continued to collect suggestions and to build internal coherence and multilateral cooperation on how best to engage on this issue. In February 2014 the EEAS held in-depth discussions with the human rights focal points of EU delegations in countries where civil society is at risk, particularly concerning rights to freedom of association and assembly. Consultations on this issue were held with EU Heads of Delegation at the annual HoDs meeting in September.

In 2014 civil society organisations continued to be the main recipient of support from the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR). Its new multiannual strategy for 2014-2017 as adopted by the Commission on 21 October 2014⁹, further reinforced the ability of this instrument to operate without the need for host government consent. The EIDHR is able to focus on sensitive issues and innovative approaches, and to cooperate directly with isolated or marginalised CSOs. It complements all the other EU instruments which mainstream human rights and democracy in their activities.

⁹ [Commission Implementing Decision C (2014) 7529 final]

In 2014, the Commission launched more than 500 new key initiatives with EIDHR support, with a budget of more than EUR 150 million covering more than 135 countries. This adds to more than 1449 ongoing EIDHR projects deployed in the field. In addition, a global call "Fighting Discrimination" led to 28 new key initiatives managed in Brussels as well as local calls for proposals implemented by EU delegations in 101 countries, which were worth more than EUR 100 million altogether. They made it possible to reinforce the role of grass root civil society in promoting human rights and democratic reforms, in facilitating the peaceful reconciliation of group interests and in consolidating political participation and representation, all over the world.

In 2014 the Commission also adopted its thematic programme for Civil Society Organisations and Local Authorities under the Development Cooperation Instrument (DCI). Action at country level will be at the core of the programme. The programme also envisages support for the strengthening of regional and global CSOs' networks with a view to enhancing their contributions to development, especially in the post-2015 development agenda. Finally, the Commission launched the process to develop EU country roadmaps for engagement with civil society in 2014. Envisaged by the September 2012 Communication from the European Commission "The Roots of democracy and sustainable development: Europe's engagement with Civil Society in external relations"¹⁰, the purpose is to develop a common strategic framework for EU delegations' engagement with civil society at country level, in coordination with locally present Member States. Roadmaps build on a comprehensive analysis of the enabling environment for civil society and set out corresponding priorities for the EU. In the course of 2014 more than 65 roadmaps have been developed and many delegations have used the roadmaps as an entry point to reach out to a broad range of CSOs with a view to having more strategic engagement.

¹⁰ (COM (2012) 492 final)

Regular assessment of implementation

The present yearly report focuses on the EU's progress and main achievements in implementing the provisions of the Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy. The thematic section reflects the Action Plan provisions, whereas a separate section covers actions taken and progress made by the EU in promoting and defending human rights and democracy throughout the world, in a country by country basis.

II Promoting the universality of human rights

Universal adherence

In line with Article 21 of the Treaty on European Union on the basis of the Human Rights Strategic Framework and Action Plan, universal human rights standards were further promoted in 2014 as the basis for the EU's engagement with third countries and regional organisations. In the year of the 10th anniversary of the EU guidelines on human rights defenders, the EU paid particular attention to the promotion of the universality of human rights, in its statements and explanations of votes as well as public events, conferences and publications. In its bilateral engagement, notably in human rights dialogues, the EU regularly pressed for the ratification and effective implementation of UN human rights instruments and the reconsideration or withdrawal of reservations.

In line with Council Decision 2011/168/CFSP on an International Criminal Court (ICC), and the EU Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy, the EU continued its efforts and outreach to encourage further countries to ratify the Rome Statute. The EU maintained its systematic démarche campaigns in support of the ICC, and its policy of including ICC clauses in agreements with third countries (such as the EU-Canada Strategic Partnership Agreement initialed in October 2014).

Likewise, cooperation with UN mechanisms and bodies (Universal Periodic Review, Special Rapporteurs and Treaty Bodies) and implementation of their recommendations have now become standard elements of the EU's bilateral engagement on human rights with third countries. In its bilateral contacts, the EU also routinely encourages third countries to extend a standing invitation to UN special rapporteurs.

Since 2003, after the Rome Statute came into force, the EU, under the EIDHR, has also provided funding of more than EUR 30 million to the global ratification campaigns undertaken by civil society organisations and to ICC projects (see section 27).

A culture of human rights and democracy in EU external action

The EEAS provided training on human rights and democracy throughout 2014, notably through the human rights series of training sessions, which were organised three times during the year for a full week (in February, June and November 2014). Those three general sessions on human rights and democracy policy and operations in EU external relations were followed by specialised modules on non-discrimination (freedom of expression, freedom of religion or belief, the rights of persons with disabilities and LGBTI rights), economic, social and cultural rights, business and human rights, gender equality, children's rights, democracy support and election observation, human rights in the UN context, and human rights in the Council of Europe. For some of these courses, the EEAS called upon the expertise of academics, representatives of NGOs from the Human Rights and Democracy Network, and officials from UN agencies and the Council of Europe. These training modules were attended by staff of the EU institutions, Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) mission and operation staff and Member State diplomats.

A mapping exercise of human rights training programmes run by Member States was launched to collect best practices and explore possible synergies (such as the sharing of material and resources). To this end, in September 2014 it was agreed that an informal network of focal points for human rights and democracy training in EU Member States would be established.

A number of other training courses on human rights and democracy took place as part of pre-deployment sessions for delegation staff, seminars for Member States' diplomats, the EEAS induction series, the International Development and Cooperation (DEVCO) regional seminars and the annual conference with the UNDP on democracy and electoral assistance. A presentation on human rights and democracy is now systematically included in all pre-posting training courses. In addition to regular debriefings with the Political and Security Committee, with the Working Party on Human Rights (COHOM) and other geographic working groups, and with the European Parliament, the EU Special Representative for Human Rights addressed all EU Heads of Delegation as well as all human rights and gender advisors in CSDP missions on best practices for mainstreaming human rights throughout the EU's external action. He also had several meetings with individual Heads of Delegation to discuss the human rights situation in their host countries and the EU's coordinated response.

In 2014, the EU also continued to support human rights education in the world through a variety of financial instruments, including the EIDHR. Projects promoted by academic institutions and NGOs in various regions targeted a wide range of people, from schoolchildren to community leaders and police authorities, including the most vulnerable groups. The European Inter-University Centre for Human Rights and Democratisation (EIUC) and the Global Campus of Regional Masters in Africa, the Asia-Pacific region, the Balkans, the Caucasus and Latin America are examples of successful projects in this field. Comprising more than 80 universities worldwide, the network provides an interdisciplinary centre of excellence offering post-graduate training on human rights. In 2014, the EIUC continued negotiations to establish an additional regional "Master in Democratic Governance in the MENA region".

III Pursuing coherent policy objectives, internally and internationally.

Effective support for democracy

In 2014, the Commission supported electoral processes across the world by deploying election observation missions (EOMs) and electoral expert missions, as well as providing technical and financial assistance to election management bodies and to domestic observers. Overall, the Commission deployed eight EOMs to observe nine elections in total. EOMs were deployed to the Maldives (legislative elections), Guinea Bissau (presidential and legislative), Malawi (presidential, legislative and local), Egypt (presidential), Kosovo (legislative), Mozambique (legislative), and Tunisia (legislative and parliamentary). The Commission deployed an election assessment team (EAT) to Afghanistan for the presidential elections, which also observed the audit of the votes, conducted following the agreement brokered by US Secretary of State Kerry.

In addition, eight electoral expert missions were deployed in the course of 2014. Electoral expert missions were sent to Egypt (constitutional referendum), Libya (Constituent Assembly), Thailand (legislative), Iraq (legislative), Algeria (presidential), Mauritania (presidential), Bolivia (presidential and legislative), and Fiji (legislative).

The EU does not observe elections in the OSCE area. However, the EU supported the OSCE/ODIHR for the presidential and parliamentary elections in Ukraine. EU efforts allowed for the deployment of 100 additional short term observers (STOs) from EU Member States and EU candidate and applicant countries. In many cases, EU EOMs assisted partner countries to overcome crisis situations and facilitated democratic and/or post conflict transitions. Progress has been made on the follow up to EU EOMs' recommendations which is key to enhancing EU EOMs' impact.

The EU has further enhanced its work on democracy support. Based on the November 2009 Council conclusions, incorporated as commitments in the Action Plan for Human Rights and Democracy, in March 2014 the EU identified 12 delegations representing all regions for a second generation of pilot work on democracy support. Work started in June. Efforts are primarily focused on work methodology and follow the six identified work areas: coherence and coordination, local context and partnership, mainstreaming and visibility. The ambition is to better integrate financial and non-financial instruments with EU Member States' work, and deepen the understanding of the local context so as to achieve better impact through strengthened partnerships. The exercise will deliver analytical results, and in due course be further defined in action plans.

Preliminary feedback has been positive as regards the identification of mutually supportive activities between political (and/or human rights) dialogues and a variety of interventions with financial instruments, including support for legal sector development, capacity building of key institutions, including in electoral management bodies, and civil society organisations. There is feedback indicating deeper coordination and coherence with Member States, as well as a variety of initiatives to engage with national stakeholders. Further work needs to be done to assist in the strengthening of the representative functions of democratic systems: parties, parliaments, decentralised bodies, etc. Key concepts relating to the areas of representation, participation, transparency, accountability and gender equality must be further developed, also at local levels. As from 2014, some funding from the EIDHR is supporting the pilot exercise by providing expert support in the implementation of activities. Important work is also done in support of civil society through the development of "roadmaps" in almost all delegations.

2014 was the first full year for the European Endowment for Democracy (EED). The budget for 2013 to 2015 is about EUR 27 million consisting of the EU grant for administrative costs and voluntary contributions from 14 EU Member States and also from Switzerland and Canada to fund EED's projects. By late 2014, the EED had received over 1,200 requests for support and accepted to fund over 130 applications at a total value of about EUR 8 million, evenly distributed between the Eastern and the Southern neighbourhoods. Throughout 2014, the EED, which is autonomous from the EU, was used in the European neighbourhood to complement the EU instruments and in particular EIDHR. The EED has been providing direct support especially to new emerging pro-democracy actors and to grass roots organisations and has remained active in all counties of the neighbourhood including Syria, Libya, Egypt and Azerbaijan where other donors have difficulties to continue their operations. In December 2014, the Board of Governance decided that EED may implement and finance a limited number of activities outside the EU neighbourhood.

A standing capability on human rights and democracy in the Council of the EU

The Working Party on Human Rights (COHOM) addresses all human rights aspects of the external relations of the European Union and supports the Council's decision-making process in this area by doing the preparatory work for discussions on human rights and democracy in the Political and Security Committee (PSC), the Permanent Representatives Committee (COREPER) and the Council. During 2014, COHOM met 44 times in both capitals and Brussels configurations, to continue to promote the effective development and oversee the worldwide implementation of the EU's policy in the field of human rights and democracy, including EU human rights guidelines, human rights dialogues and consultations with third countries.

COHOM continued its cooperation with the geographic Working Parties of the Council dealing with the human rights situation in the countries within their respective geographic remit, as well as with relevant thematic Working Parties of the Council¹¹, with the aim of mainstreaming human rights in all aspects of EU external relations. COHOM also engaged with the Working Party on Fundamental Rights, Citizens' Rights and Free Movement of Persons (FREMP) (see section 8). In early 2014, COHOM discussed the EU's strategic priorities in UN Human Rights Fora for the year, which contributed to successful outcomes at the Human Rights Council session and the 69th session of the Third Committee of the UN General Assembly. Throughout the year, the EEAS and Commission services coordinate the EU position with Member States in COHOM with regard to specific thematic or geographic issues which arose in multilateral fora.

COHOM maintained its periodic exchanges of views with the EU Special Representative for Human Rights. COHOM also hosted regular discussions with representatives from international organisations, regional organisations and civil society. High-level guest speakers included the Chair of the European Parliament Subcommittee on Human Rights, Regional Representative for Europe of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, UN Special Rapporteurs and the Director of the Fundamental Rights Agency.

COHOM's task forces, which support COHOM's work in specific priority areas, in particular the implementation of EU guidelines in the field of human rights, continued their work in 2014. Nine task forces were active in 2014 and brought together the relevant experts from the EEAS, the Commission services and the Member States.

¹¹ CODEV, COSCE, COTER, PMG, CIVCOM, CONUN

Achieving greater policy coherence

Within the EU, the EU institutions and its Member States, when they implement EU law, are bound by the provisions of the Chart of Fundamental Rights of the EU. In its external action, the EU is determined to promote human rights and democracy through all its external actions in line with Article 21 of the Treaty on European Union.

Efforts were reinforced in 2014 to continue to address issues of coherence and consistency between the EU's internal and external human rights policies. At its meeting in June 2014, the Justice and Home Affairs Council adopted conclusions¹² recognising the importance of internal-external consistency in order to enhance the European Union's credibility in its external relations and to lead by example in the area of human rights. To this end, the Council considered it important to strengthen cooperation between various Council working groups, particularly between the Council Working Party on Fundamental Rights, Citizens' Rights and Free Movement of Persons (within the EU) - and the Working Party on Human Rights (in external action) -, in particular through the regular exchange of information and joint thematic meetings, as appropriate, on specific issues. In this spirit, cooperation between FREMP and COHOM was intensified in 2014 through periodic exchanges. Efforts will need to continue to further strengthen the coherence and consistency between the EU's internal and external human rights policies.

¹² http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_data/docs/pressdata/en/jha/143099.pdf

Respect for economic, social and cultural rights

The European Union attaches great importance to the interdependence of all human rights and to the indivisibility of civil and political rights and economic, social and cultural rights (ESCR), as fundamental tenets of international human rights law.

At multilateral level, the EU actively supported and cooperated with several UN Special Rapporteurs (SR) working on ESCR, and invited several of them to a meeting (COHOM). UN Special Rapporteurs on ESCR include the Special Representatives on the right to water and sanitation, the right to education, the right to food, extreme poverty, and the right to housing. In addition, the EU paid increasing attention to ESCR during human rights dialogues with various third country partners.

The promotion of economic, social and cultural rights, including the right to an adequate standard of living and core labour standards, has been reinforced in the EIDHR Multi-Indicative Programme 2014-2017. A great variety of EIDHR projects are supported to advance economic, social and cultural rights worldwide. These projects contributed in 2014 to the strengthening of trade unions, increasing awareness of wage-related issues in Asia, the protection of land heritage and communities in Angola's rural areas, the promotion and social integration of the Menjas community through economic empowerment in Ethiopia, as well as the reduction of economic discrimination and workplace violence in Indian export-orientated garment factories.

IV Human rights in all EU external policies and instruments

Working towards a rights-based approach to development cooperation

In 2014, the Council and the European Parliament adopted the new external financial instruments (2014-2020), in which human rights and democracy feature as key principles and/or are covered by dedicated programmes, including¹³ in the EIDHR, in the thematic programme on Civil Society Organisations and Local Authorities (CSO-LA) under the DCI and in the Instrument contributing to Stability and Peace (IcSP)¹⁴. All of them are used, directly or indirectly, to promote human rights and democracy in line with the EU Strategic Framework on Human Rights and Democracy and the Agenda for Change¹⁵.

In 2014, the EEAS and Commission services finalised the bilateral programming exercise with partner countries, the Commission adopted strategic programming documents and multiannual indicative programmes for 2014-2020. Human rights, democracy and other key elements of good governance were addressed either as key focal sectors or through the implementation of the rights-based approach in other areas of cooperation.

¹³ This is especially relevant for the Development Cooperation Instrument (DCI), the European Development Fund (EDF), the European Neighbourhood Instrument (ENI) and the Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance (IPA II).

¹⁴ Regulation (EU) No 230/2014

¹⁵ In 2011 the EU adopted two reforms designed to make its development policy both more strategic and more targeted: the 12-point Agenda for Change and new policy and rules for budget support. <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX%3A52011DC0637&qid=1412922281378&from=EN>

The EU commitment to the rights-based approach was formalised in the 2014 Commission Staff Working Document on "a right based approach, encompassing all human rights for EU development cooperation"¹⁶. In May 2014 the Council conclusions welcomed this significant step and highlighted the key principles it contains. The toolbox outlined in the Commission Staff Working Document (SWD) provides concrete guidance on how to apply a rights-based approach to any development programme or project, using five working principles: applying all rights, participation and access to the decision-making process, non-discrimination and equal access, transparency and access to information.

In parallel with the programming exercise, the Commission continued to assess respect for fundamental values in its budget support programmes. As of 1 January 2013, the methodology laid down in this respect in the Budget Support Guidelines is fully implemented for all new budget support programmes.

In 2014, the EU continued to shape its position and strategy for the follow-up to Rio+20 and the post-2015 development agenda. The EU has been a vocal advocate for the integration of human rights, rule of law and governance issues in the global development agenda. The EU drafted a number of policy statements which were endorsed at Council level, most recently in December 2014¹⁷. The EU contributed actively to many international discussions, including the UN Open Working Group sessions, the Human Rights Council and informal debates of the General Assembly.

¹⁶ SWD(2014) 152 final, Brussels, 30 April 2014

¹⁷ http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_data/docs/pressdata/EN/foraff/146311.pdf

Making trade work in a way that helps human rights

EU free trade agreements are linked through "passerelle" clauses to the corresponding political framework agreements, which include human rights clauses. If there is no association or framework agreement in force, a separate human rights clause is inserted in free trade agreements. The principal value of a human rights clause is to demonstrate the shared commitment of the parties to human rights, while it also constitutes the legal basis for appropriate measures, including the suspension of the agreements, in the event of grave human rights violations (see section 33). An openness to trade, combined with good governance and sound domestic policies, is a major contributor to inclusive growth and sustainable development, and thus to improved human rights conditions. In line with the Communication on Trade, Growth and Development: Tailoring trade and investment policy for those countries most in need¹⁸, the EU continued in 2014 to help developing countries, particularly least-developed countries (LDCs) and other countries most in need, to become integrated into the global trading system and benefit as much as possible from trade. This is based in particular on the EU's Aid for Trade policy, its unilateral trade preferences and its bilateral and regional trade agreements.

¹⁸ [COM(2012) 22] http://trade.ec.europa.eu/doclib/docs/2012/january/tradoc_148992.EN.pdf

The new GSP (general tariff preferences) Regulation has been applied since 1 January 2014. Fourteen countries have been granted GSP+ preferences under the new scheme. The new regulation reinforces monitoring mechanisms for compliance with international conventions (including core human rights conventions) by GSP+ beneficiaries, and the Commission will report every two years on the implementation record of GSP+ beneficiaries to the Council and the European Parliament. . During 2014 the dialogue between the EU and GSP+ beneficiaries on the implementation of the conventions intensified, and the EU started to put in place additional innovative ways to providing support for implementation, enforcement and monitoring of the relevant human rights treaties and ILO Conventions. Responding in particular to calls from the European Parliament, a general review of Regulation (EC) No 1236/2005 on trade in goods which could be used for capital punishment or torture¹⁹ was carried out by the Commission. A proposal for amending the regulation to update the list of goods subject to export controls was presented to the Council and European Parliament in early 2014. In 2013, the Wassenaar Arrangement introduced controls on exports of certain surveillance technology. As a result, the EU implemented these controls on specific intrusion software and internet monitoring equipment through a Commission Delegated Regulation of 22 October 2014.

The Commission is also assessing long-term options to address the issue, and adopted a Communication on a review of export control policies, including one option regarding the possibility of adapting certain provisions of the existing Export Control Regulation (EC) No 428/2009 so as to control exports of sensitive technologies that could be used in violation of human rights e.g. in conflict zones or by authoritarian regimes. Following the progressive deterioration of the situation in Syria, the Council decided in May 2014 to prolong the ban on the export of equipment or software intended primarily for the monitoring or interception of internet and telephone communications by the Syrian government, which was originally imposed by Regulation No 36 of 2012.

¹⁹ Commission Implementing Regulation (EU) No 1352/2011 of 20 December 2011

In 2014, the EU, a longstanding supporter of the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT), which is a milestone towards greater responsibility and transparency in arms trade, continued to promote its ratification by all UN Member States. At the end of 2014, the deposit of the 50th ratification instrument - with a significant contribution from EU Member States - triggered the entry into force of the ATT. The Treaty requires in Article 7 that the risk of arms being used to commit or facilitate serious violations of human rights or international humanitarian law, including acts of gender-based violence, must be assessed in arms export decisions. Such risk assessment comes in addition to the prohibition of arms exports under Article 6 if they could be used in the commission of genocide, crimes against humanity, grave breaches of the Geneva Convention, attacks directed against civilians or other war crimes as defined by relevant international conventions.

Reflecting human rights in conflict prevention and crisis management activities

The EU took additional steps in 2014 to mainstream its human rights and gender policies in the planning, implementation, conduct and evaluation of Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) missions and operations.

In line with the 2013 Crisis Management Procedures²⁰, human rights and gender considerations were addressed during the planning process for new missions and operations, and an analysis of the human rights and gender situation was integrated into planning documents, including for the EU Advisory Mission for Civilian Security Sector Reform Ukraine and EUFOR Central African Republic.

²⁰ <http://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-7660-2013-REV-2/en/pdf>

In 2014, there were advisers or focal points for human rights and gender in all CSDP missions and operations, whose tasks include both mainstreaming human rights and gender into the work of the mission or operation, and implementing specific activities. Such activities include, for example, further support from EUPOL Afghanistan for female police officers within the Afghan National Police, the reinforcement of the gender advisory capacity of the EUPOL Afghanistan mission itself, and training for local military forces on international humanitarian and human rights law by both EUTM Mali and EUTM Somalia.

The human rights and gender advisers in CSDP missions met in Brussels in June 2014 for their annual seminar, a valuable opportunity for the advisers to exchange best practices and identify common challenges. In order to make such information sharing more systematic, an email-based community of practice is being established, enabling more frequent exchanges between missions and operations and with thematic experts at headquarters.

Human rights and gender components were included in many CSDP courses organised by the European Security and Defence College and by Member States, and specialised thematic training sessions were also conducted on human rights, gender, children in armed conflict and the protection of civilians.

Work continued on the EU's comprehensive approach to the implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security and its follow-up resolutions. The Second Report on the EU indicators for the comprehensive approach to the implementation of the resolutions was published in January 2014, prioritising - for the next reporting period - transitional justice, women's political participation and economic empowerment, women's involvement in peace processes and the prevention of sexual violence in conflict. The annual EU Member States' seminar on the implementation of UNSCR 1325, which took place in July 2014, focused on the forthcoming 15th anniversary of the resolution and how to take into account peace and security issues in the upcoming negotiations of the post-2015 development agenda. The EU Informal Taskforce on UNSCR 1325 continued its regular meetings, with participation by Member States, NATO, UN Women, the OSCE and civil society. A dedicated website was also created, with all the key documents on the EU's approach to UNSCR 1325²¹. An external evaluation of the crisis preparedness component of the Instrument contributing to Stability and Peace was finalised in mid-2014. The evaluation noted that the crisis preparedness component contributes to the fulfilment of EU commitments related to Women, Peace and Security (WPS). This specific support on WPS is currently implemented in 17 countries and three regions worldwide: Afghanistan, Bolivia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Brazil, Chad, Democratic Republic of the Congo, El Salvador, Guinea Bissau, India, the Kyrgyz Republic, Liberia, Nepal, Nicaragua, Peru, Senegal, the Solomon Islands, Yemen, the Central American region, the South Asian region, and the southern region of Central Africa. A literature review on gender in fragile and conflict-affected situations was commissioned by the Service for Foreign Policy Instruments of the European Commission in 2014, with the aim of informing and orientating policy-makers on the key debates and emerging issues in the field.

²¹ http://eeas.europa.eu/special-features/working-with-women/article21_en.htm

In 2014, the conflict Early Warning System (EWS) was gradually rolled out at a global level. The tools and methodology developed for the EWS include many human rights-related indicators, such as respect for the international human rights framework, gender inequality, press freedom and respect for civil and political freedoms. Delegations in countries that were estimated to be at risk of violent conflict in the medium to long term were asked to provide assessments and propose options for preventive action. Similarly, conflict analysis workshops were held in and on a number of countries. Also there, the methodology is mindful of human rights and gender aspects.

Entrenching human rights in counter-terrorism activities

In line with the EU Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy, the EEAS and Commission services elaborated a counter-terrorism (CT) guidance document, which was endorsed by Member States in November 2014. The purpose of the guidance is to ensure that human rights considerations and, where applicable, international humanitarian law are taken into account in the planning and implementation of counter-terrorism assistance projects with third countries.

The manner in which CT efforts are conducted can have a far-reaching effect on a state's overall respect for human rights. For instance, in some countries the definition of terrorism is vague and applied in an overly broad manner; when counter-terrorism operations are conducted, certain human rights (including right to life, or the prohibition of torture) may be put at risk; operations may occasionally be used to suppress political opponents.

The EU funds a number of capacity-building projects in the area of counter-terrorism, often in countries having weak human rights records. Therefore it is particularly important that a European approach that is respectful of human rights is shared with those countries, in order to encourage greater human rights compliance.

The guidance is intended to apply to future EU CT capacity-building projects in third countries, as well as to security and justice projects having a CT component. It provides an overview and a series of tools to assess human rights/IHL obligations. It is aimed at all EU institutions and project-implementing partners at all stages of the projects (planning, implementation and monitoring/evaluation), to ensure that there is greater consistency in the approach taken across all EU actions. Member States may, if they so wish, also use the guidance for their own projects. The EU is continuously engaging in political outreach through political dialogues on CT with many key partners and international organisations. Political dialogues consist of an exchange of views on key CT developments and are an important platform to raise critical issues. These dialogues contribute to deepening the bilateral and international consensus and enhancing international efforts to prevent and fight terrorism. They form part of the overall EU approach to build confidence and trust with key partners. In 2014 the following CT political dialogue meetings took place: UN, US, Canada, Turkey, Saudi Arabia and Australia. Specific CT consultations with Indonesia and the UAE were also held. In line with the Action Plan, on all of these occasions the EU promoted and discussed the core issue of respect for human rights and the rule of law in CT efforts.

As far as multilateral cooperation is concerned, the EU strongly believes in the key role of the UN in addressing the global threat of terrorism. UNSCR 1373/2001 and the 2006 UN Global CT Strategy have been milestones in multilateral CT cooperation. The UN Global CT Strategy is fully compatible with the EU's approach to counter-terrorism. The EU and UN agendas on CT are rooted in the same principle – promotion of the criminal justice approach, while protecting human rights and upholding the rule of law. Specific EU-UN CT cooperation issues relating to foreign terrorist fighters and countering violent extremism were discussed with relevant UN Agencies. The EU and its Member States welcomed the adoption of UNSCR 2170/2014, condemning gross, widespread abuse of human rights by extremist groups in Iraq and Syria, and UNSCR 2178/2014 on condemning violent extremism, underscoring the need to prevent travel and support for foreign terrorist fighters, which are in line with the conclusions adopted by the Council of the EU on 30 August 2014²². The EU and its Member States also strongly support action under UNSCR 2178/2014, including efforts to bolster international action to counter violent extremism which will remain a focus of EU efforts as it is a prerequisite to sustainably tackling the scourge of terrorism. Throughout the year, the EU continued to issue statements at the UN and other international fora, condemning terrorist attacks and promoting a CT approach, based on the respect of human rights and the rule of law and in full conformity with international law.

²² http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_data/docs/pressdata/en/ec/144538.pdf

Ensuring human rights underpin the external dimension of work in the area of freedom, security and justice (FSJ)

The respect and protection of human rights are at the core of the EU Justice and Home Affairs related policies. In this context, human rights are a cross cutting element of the EU Migration policy, and thus will be reflected in the upcoming EU Agenda on Migration, of the Global Approach to Migration and Mobility (GAMM), the overarching framework of the EU external migration policy and a key element of the EU return and readmission policy. Hence, the protection of human rights is systematically included in all GAMM frameworks, in particular in dialogues on migration and mobility with third countries and regions as well as in the Mobility Partnerships (MPs) and Common Agendas on Migration and Mobility (CAMMs) concluded with third countries, visa dialogues and in the implementation of EU Readmission Agreements. Furthermore, the EU has advocated for stepping up the protection of the human rights of the migrants in the global fora. This was also the case during the Summit of the Global Forum for Migration and Development which took place in Stockholm on 14-16 May 2014.

The protection of migrant's rights is also a cross cutting element of the work of the Task Force Mediterranean. In the framework of the GAMM, the Task Force has given new impetus to the EU's efforts to strengthen dialogue and cooperation with countries of transit and origin in the Southern Mediterranean. In May 2014, the Commission issued a Staff Working Document on the implementation of the Communication on the Task Force Mediterranean, which identified a series of actions undertaken by the EU and its Member States to protect the rights of migrants and refugees in countries of transit and origin.

Likewise, migration-related issues, including the use of arbitrary detention and THB, were discussed in human rights dialogues with relevant third countries.

Trafficking in human beings is a gross violation of human rights; therefore the EU places the protection of human rights at the heart of its policy. During 2014, the EU continued to implement the Strategy towards the Eradication of Trafficking in Human Beings (THB) 2012-2016 and the 2009 Action Oriented Paper (AOP)²³ on strengthening the external dimension on action against trafficking. In the second implementation report of the AOP, in December 2012, the Council agreed on a list of priority third countries and regions with which the EU should strengthen cooperation and partnerships on THB. In June 2014 the EEAS and the Commission services sent out a joint note providing information on the EU's activities to combat THB in a number of priority countries and regions, including an inventory of relevant tools and instruments available to the EU. This serves as a reference tool for EU delegations and Member States, so as to enhance cooperation and improve the coherence of anti-THB action.

EU delegations in these priority countries were asked to create partnerships and ensure coordination and coherence in their host countries, appointing a contact person for THB-related issues, organising coordination meetings, closely monitoring EU-funded projects on THB and ensuring a regular exchange of information with the host-country authorities. To facilitate this work, in June 2014 the Commission services organised a three-day training course for staff from EU delegations on external cooperation in the area of THB, with a particular focus on the priority countries and regions.

²³ Adopted by the Council on 30 November 2009 (6865/10 CRIMORG 38 JAIEX 22 RELEX 163 JAI 168).

Eradicating THB is a priority area GAMM,. Preventing and combating THB, and the protection of its victims, are systematically addressed in all relevant agreements and partnerships with non-EU countries and in all EU dialogues on migration and mobility, including the Mobility Partnerships, the Common Agendas on Migration and Mobility and the visa liberalisation dialogues. Likewise, the EU raises THB in the framework of its Human Rights Dialogues with over 40 countries worldwide as an important element of its Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy. It also supports international efforts in this field, advocating in various UN fora for prevention, victim protection and assistance, establishment of a comprehensive legislative framework, policy development and law enforcement, and improved international cooperation and coordination in the work on THB.

In terms of support for developing partner countries, the EU continued to implement a range of projects in all migration-related areas, under both thematic and geographic instruments. In line with the GAMM, all projects applied a migrant-centred approach and had a strong cross-cutting focus on human rights. New projects were launched to support displaced refugees and host communities in countries neighbouring Syria, and to support particularly vulnerable categories of migrants, such as victims of trafficking and migrant domestic workers.

Migration and asylum is a key priority under the thematic programme "Global Public Goods and Challenges" (GPGC) under the DCI, which was adopted in 2014 for a period of 7 years. The migration and asylum component under this programme aims to enhance the governance of migration in developing countries, placing particular attention on maximising the positive impact of migration and mobility on development. The programme follows a migrant-centred approach and puts specific emphasis on the need to promote the benefits of migration for migrants themselves and for their communities of origin, while supporting their integration into host communities. The protection of the human rights of migrants, and particularly vulnerable categories of migrants, is a cross-cutting objective. The Commission adopted the thematic programme with an allocation for the GPGC migration and asylum component of EUR 46.3 million, which was allocated to eight projects. These included a global project on support for migrants caught in countries in crisis, a global action to prevent and address trafficking in human beings and the smuggling of migrants, and a specific action to address mixed migration flows in Eastern Africa, with particular attention to forced displacement, the trafficking and smuggling of migrants, and stranded migrants in vulnerable situations in the region.

The respect for fundamental rights, for human dignity and human right is also one of the guiding principles of the EU Drugs Strategy and the EU Action Plan on Drugs. This is an integral part of drug policy and a fundamental element of the so-called "EU model" on drugs.

Ensuring the promotion of human rights in the external dimension of employment and social policy

The core labour standards of the International Labour Organisation (ILO) are embodied in its eight fundamental conventions. The EU promotes the ratification and effective implementation of these conventions through cooperation with the ILO, including participation in an ongoing discussion on labour standards and in the work of the ILO supervisory bodies. At the same time, in the external dimension of its employment and social policy, the EU promotes the principles of decent work, including respect for the ILO fundamental conventions, in relations with partner countries, by means of bilateral and regional policy dialogues and implementation of development assistance projects.

In 2014, the 103rd session of the International Labour Conference (ILC) has adopted a Protocol and a Recommendation to the Forced Labour Convention (No 29) of 1930, i.e. one of the eight ILO fundamental conventions. The new standard addresses modern forms of forced labour, including in the context of trafficking in human beings, by helping to improve prevention of forced labour, protection of victims, access to justice and compensation measures, as well as enforcement, including through international cooperation and/or assistance. The EU and its Member States have been actively participating in the preparatory work on the new standard. EU coordinated input to the International Labour Conference in June 2014 was very important and contributed to a successful result. Member States should take the necessary steps to ratify the Protocol by the end of 2016.

The EU contributed to promote decent work for seafarers, in the context of the adoption of amendments to the Maritime Labour Convention during the ILC. The adopted amendments, which received full support from the EU before the Conference 24, are providing seafarers with protection in case of abandonment and financial security in case of work-related death or invalidity. EU efforts towards decent work took further shape when the EU Council of Ministers adopted a Decision in January 2014, authorising Member States to ratify the ILO Convention concerning fair and decent work for domestic workers (Convention No. 189). The Decision was proposed by the Commission in March 2013, and endorsed by the European Parliament. The Commission reiterated its call to Member States to ratify the Convention as part of the EU strategy against Trafficking in Human Beings.

As regards the enlargement policy, in 2014, the EU discussed with candidate country Turkey the compatibility of the Turkish trade union legislation with EU standards and the relevant ILO conventions, in particular N° 87 (freedom of association) and N° 98 (right to organise and collective bargaining)

The European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) underlined the need for further efforts to ratify and effectively implement the ILO fundamental conventions. A number of neighbourhood countries often associate themselves with the EU and its Member States positions during ILO discussions. In relations with Georgia and the Republic of Moldova, association agreements, including provisions on a deep and comprehensive free trade area (DCFTA), were signed in June 2014 and entered into provisional application on 1st September 2014. They include commitments to effective implementation of the ratified ILO fundamental conventions. The Association Agreement with Ukraine was also signed in 2014. Provisional application started in November 2014 but was postponed by a year for the DCFTA part. In Ukraine, as a consequence of the conflict in the East and its spill-over negative effect on the whole socio-economic situation, respect for labour standards and labour rights severely deteriorated.

²⁴ Council Decision 2014/346/EU of 26 May 2014: http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/HTML/?uri=OJ:JOL_2014_172_R_0003&from=EN

The EU also actively participated in the post-2015 development agenda and Rio+20 follow-up process thereby demonstrating its support for productive employment, decent work for all, including job creation, guarantees of rights at work, social protection and social dialogue as well as addressing inequalities.

The EU promoted the economic and social rights in the discussions in international forums, such as the G20. In 2014, the G20 leaders gave a strong message that raising global growth to deliver better living standards and quality jobs for people across the world is their highest priority. They reiterated their commitment to reducing youth unemployment, which is unacceptably high, by acting to ensure young people are in education, training or employment. They also recognised the need to addressing informality, as well as structural and long-term unemployment, by strengthening labour markets and having appropriate social protection systems. Improving workplace safety and health was mentioned among priorities.

Effective implementation of the ILO fundamental conventions has also been promoted through development assistance.

The European Investment Bank's social due diligence is founded on ILO's core labour standards. The Bank standards explicitly exclude practices such as child labour, bonded or forced labour. Where the host country does not protect workers' association and collective bargaining rights, Borrowers are nonetheless expected to strive towards allowing for the introduction of alternative acceptable mechanisms to express grievances and protect workers' rights regarding the working environment and terms of employment. In either case, or where the law is silent, borrowers are required to not restrict workers from, or discriminate or retaliate against workers, who seek to participate in collective organisations and bargaining. Borrowers are required to address adherence to core labour standards in their supply chains, ensuring that their primary contractors and first-tier suppliers equally apply these and duly reflecting these standards in their procurement documents, contracts and monitoring arrangements.

Civil society organisations working to promote the implementation of labour standards and decent work were supported through the EIDHR.

In February 2014, the 52nd session of the United Nations Commission for Social Development (CSocD) discussed the priority theme “Promoting empowerment of people in achieving poverty eradication, social integration and full employment and decent work for all”. In its resolution, the CSocD invited UN Member States to give due consideration to poverty eradication, social inclusion, full employment and decent work for all in the forthcoming post-2015 development agenda. The Civil Society Forum urged governments to implement the ILO Recommendation No. 202 concerning the establishment of national floors of social protection and the Decent Work Agenda as an effective means to guarantee full and productive employment and income security.

V Implementing EU priorities on human rights

Abolition of the death penalty

Throughout 2014, the EU continued to reaffirm its opposition to the death penalty and used all diplomatic tools at its disposal to advance the cause of worldwide abolition. The EU's strong policy against capital punishment is reflected in the EU guidelines, updated and revised in 2013, while the movement towards abolition is one of the top priorities identified in the Strategic Framework and Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy.

To mark the European Day against the Death Penalty and the World Day against the Death Penalty on 10 October, the EU and the Council of Europe issued a joint statement reaffirming their opposition to the use of capital punishment in all circumstances, and their commitment to the abolition of the death penalty worldwide. In that declaration, both the High Representative Catherine Ashton as well as the Council of Europe Secretary General Thorbjørn Jagland underlined their deep concern about setbacks in some countries, such as recent mass trials leading to a vast number of death sentences, the extension in domestic legislation of the scope of the death penalty's use, or the resumption of executions after a period of several years²⁵. On 10 October, EU delegations across the globe, especially in retentionist countries, organised various events and gave maximum publicity to the abolitionist agenda, including in their contacts with officials and civil society.

The EU supported the recent steps taken by the African Union towards the adoption of an Additional Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Abolition of the Death Penalty. It also welcomed the recent ratifications (El Salvador and Gabon) of the 1989 Second Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, aiming at the abolition of the death penalty, bringing the number of States Parties to 81. The EU, in its contacts with third countries, continued to encourage all states which have not yet done so to ratify this protocol on the occasion of its 25th anniversary in 2014.

The EU also deplored the continuing extensive use of the death penalty in other parts of the world. Iran, Iraq, Saudi Arabia, Afghanistan, Belarus, Egypt, Japan, Singapore, China, Taiwan and the USA were a particular focus of attention, but statements were issued and démarches were carried out in relation to many other countries, based on the minimum standards defined by international law and on the EU guidelines on the death penalty.

²⁵ http://eeas.europa.eu/statements/docs/2014/141009_03_en.pdf

The EU continued to voice its opposition to the death penalty in all relevant multilateral fora, in particular at the UN, the OSCE and the Council of Europe. The EU participated in the UNGA High Level Ministerial Meeting, co-organised by OHCHR, Italy, Chile, Mongolia, Tunisia and Benin on "Leadership and moving away from the death penalty" (New York, 25 September 2014).

Through extensive lobbying and outreach, the EU actively participated in the cross-regional alliance promoting UN General Assembly Resolution 69/186 (18 December 2014) reaffirming the call for a moratorium on the use of the death penalty. The resolution – co-sponsored by 95 states – was adopted with an unprecedented number of 117 votes in favour, 37 against and 34 abstentions, a significant improvement compared to similar resolutions in 2007, 2008, 2010 and 2012.

The EU made six statements on the death penalty in the OSCE Permanent Council during 2014, criticising death sentences that had been passed in OSCE participating States (Belarus and the US). A further statement, made on European and World Day against the Death Penalty on 10 October and based on the joint declaration by the High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and the Secretary General of the Council of Europe, was also delivered in the Permanent Council. The EU also raised concerns about the continued use of the death penalty during OSCE events in 2014, including the annual OSCE Human Dimension Implementation Meeting in September and at a Supplementary OSCE Human Dimension Meeting on preventing torture in April 2014.

The EIDHR is an essential part of the EU's commitment to opposing the death penalty. Through the EIDHR, the European Union is the leading donor supporting civil society organisations' efforts towards abolition. The EIDHR is currently supporting eight ongoing projects relating to the death penalty, selected by two global calls for proposals launched in 2008 and in 2011. These projects focus on three main areas of progress: reforming criminal codes, respecting the relevant international and regional instruments, and developing a conducive environment for further abolition.

The ongoing EIDHR projects on the death penalty provide comprehensive geographical coverage of countries where the death penalty has not yet been abolished, including countries in Asia (China, India, Taiwan, etc.), the Americas (Caribbean countries, the USA), Africa (Liberia, Mali, Uganda, etc.), Eastern Europe (Belarus and Russia), and the MENA Region (Jordan, Morocco and Tunisia). This assistance is channelled through the EIDHR Country-Based Support Schemes (CBSS) and through global calls.

Eradication of torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment

The EU carried forward the implementation of the Guidelines on torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment. It encouraged all countries to ratify and implement the Convention against Torture and its Optional Protocol and raised individual cases of torture and ill-treatment in its human rights dialogues with third countries, as well as during visits to those countries. It also issued statements to congratulate third countries that have ratified the Convention and/or its Optional Protocol.

The EU continued to strengthen its cooperation with multilateral fora such as the Council of Europe, the UN and the OSCE, as well as with civil society organisations working to eradicate torture. The EU actively participated in the OSCE Supplementary Human Dimension Meeting on Prevention of Torture in Vienna in April 2014. Together with Norway, the EU organised a side event on 11 April on combatting torture and abolishing the death penalty in the OSCE region.

A statement was issued on the UN's International Day in Support of Victims of Torture (26 June). The EU expressed its support for the Convention against Torture Initiative launched by Denmark, Chile, Indonesia, Ghana and Morocco in March 2014, and reiterated this support in the side event organised on 23 September during the UNGA week in New York. On 3 December an event was organised in Brussels to raise awareness on the 30th anniversary of the Convention against Torture, and to discuss the way forward to ensure the widest possible implementation of the Convention. The event was organised in cooperation with civil society and attracted high-level speakers and participants from international and regional organisations, civil society, and EU Member States. From the discussion it was concluded that there is an urgent need to reinvigorate the debate on torture to achieve universal ratification and implementation of the Convention and counter any perceptions that torture can be tolerated for "exceptional" reasons. The EU has an important role to play in this debate. The anniversary of the Convention was also highlighted in the HR/VP's statement on Human Rights Day (10 December).

Throughout the year the EEAS and the Commission services cooperated closely with the European Parliament's Subcommittee on Human Rights on both the preparation and the follow-up of the European Parliament's resolution of 11 March on the eradication of torture in the world.

The Union's actions on eradication of torture include measures to prevent the trade in certain goods that could be used for capital punishment or torture or other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment. Council Regulation (EC) No 1236/2005 concerns trade in such goods. The current lists of prohibited and controlled goods are set out in Commission Implementing Regulation (EU) No 775/2014. The Commission's proposal from 2014 for amendments to Council Regulation (EC) No 1236/2005 is currently under discussion in the European Parliament and the Council of the EU.

The EU continued to provide a wealth of financial support to civil society organisations and human rights defenders around the world working to make the absolute prohibition of torture and ill-treatment a reality for all, to support the rehabilitation of torture victims and their families, and to support countries in fulfilling their commitments, for example by establishing independent National Prevention Mechanisms. In recent years, an average of EUR 12 million per year from the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights has been dedicated to actions against torture.

Effective support for human rights defenders

The EU remains committed to supporting human rights defenders, who play a vital role in the promotion and protection of human rights. EU Foreign Ministers restated this commitment in conclusions that were adopted at the Council on 23 June 2014, marking the 10th anniversary of the adoption of the EU Guidelines on Human Rights Defenders, and emphasised the particularly important role of female HRDs and HRDs from vulnerable and marginalised groups.

In May, EU delegations were provided with detailed guidance on the implementation of the Guidelines on Human Rights Defenders, setting out best practices for handling cases. Throughout the year, EU delegations were active in working to protect human rights defenders, who have continued to face increasing pressure from the authorities and from non-state actors in many countries. EU diplomats monitored trials, visited detained activists and issued statements on individual cases. The EU regularly raised individual cases at bilateral meetings, including high-level political dialogues, and urged partner governments to release imprisoned human rights defenders. Civil society representatives are now routinely consulted by EU delegations and the Member States' embassies, including at formal annual meetings with human rights defenders.

Under the EIDHR, substantial funds were allocated to support human rights defenders. Fifteen new projects, worth more than EUR 15 million, were launched in support of human rights defenders. These new actions added to the 150 existing projects in this area, which have a total value of more than EUR 120 million. In addition, a new call for proposals worth EUR 15 million was launched on 3 December 2014. As set out in the new EIDHR Regulation for 2014-2020, this call aims to establish a comprehensive human rights defenders mechanism, with three core priorities: (i) focusing on the most difficult situations and the most vulnerable HRDs; (ii) providing urgent, medium-term and long-term support to HRDs; (iii) ensuring coordination and outreach. These three core priorities will be pursued through four types of activities: (i) support to HRDs in the field including emergency support to HRDs, support to local HRD organisations and temporary relocation; (ii) training, monitoring and advocacy; (iii) coordination and synergies including management of the temporary relocation platform (supported by the Commission as part of another ongoing EIDHR project); (iv) outreach and visibility.

Furthermore, during 2014 the Commission continued to provide ad-hoc grants of up to EUR 10 000 directly to human rights defenders in cases of urgent need. By the end of 2014, over 220 grants amounting to a total sum of over EUR 1.6 million had been disbursed. This type of support covered different kinds of support to defenders (individuals and/or organisations), including medical aid, legal expenses, the purchase of security material for offices or homes, the urgent relocation of activists at risk, support to families of imprisoned or deceased defenders, etc. The report "Delivering on Human Rights Defenders", available at www.eidhr.eu/library, offers a comprehensive picture of EIDHR-funded actions in support of defenders worldwide.

The European Parliament continued to be a strong advocate for human rights defenders, most notably through the work of the subcommittee on human rights. The European Parliament's Sakharov Prize, which honours exceptional individuals who combat intolerance, fanaticism and oppression in particularly difficult circumstances, was awarded in 2014 to Denis Mukwege, a doctor in the Democratic Republic of the Congo who has dedicated his life to working with victims of sexual and gender-based violence.

Promotion and protection of children's rights

This year the EU celebrated the 25th anniversary of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and the awarding of the Nobel Peace Prize to Malala Yousafzai and the Indian children's rights activist Kailash Satyarthi. To mark this anniversary and the EU's commitment to children in its internal and external policies, the Council adopted conclusions on the promotion and protection of children's rights in early December. EU delegations and UNICEF country offices around the world also used this occasion to partner on the organisation of activities to mark the launch of the EU-UNICEF "Child Rights Toolkit: Integrating child rights in development cooperation"²⁶, officially released in 2014. DG DEVCO and UNICEF also celebrated this anniversary with a public conference on 20 November highlighting achievements and challenges for the post-2015 Agenda. Also, the HR/VP Federica Mogherini delivered the opening statement in the EP plenary debate on the 25th anniversary of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child²⁷.

In line with the EU's close cooperation with UNICEF and the UN, it actively supported the campaign "Children, Not Soldiers", which was jointly initiated by UNICEF and the UN Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict and which aims to end the recruitment and use of children by government armed forces in conflict by 2016. The EU re-affirmed its strong support for the campaign during the visit of the UN Special Representative to Brussels in December.

²⁶ <http://www.unicef.org/eu/crtoolkit/toolkit.html>

²⁷ https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_m-cpAnZ8Wk&list=UUw6E9hgCbubPf_IsofVkiqg

More than 108 000 children in armed conflict have benefited from the decision to use the Nobel Prize money awarded to the EU in 2012 to assist children in conflict situations. The EU Children of Peace Initiative was turned into a multi-annual assistance programme on education in emergencies with as much as EUR 6, 712, 500 committed in 2014 (including national contributions from Luxembourg and Austria). In 2014, 12 new EU Children of Peace Initiative projects were selected in 10 countries, benefitting an additional 155 000 children.

The EU remains committed to eliminating child labour, in particular its worst forms. According to the ILO, the estimated number of children involved in child labour worldwide has declined from 246 million to 168 million²⁸ between 2000 and 2012. However, 85 million child labourers in the 5-17 years age group are involved in hazardous work, one of the worst forms of child labour. This means they are working in an environment that directly endangers their health, safety and/or moral development. In 2014, in line with ILO Convention 182 on the worst forms of child labour, the EU advocated the establishment of hazardous work lists in 33 countries in two regions: sub-Saharan Africa and Europe/Central Asia. End 2014, under the Development Cooperation Instrument (DCI), the Commission awarded grants worth EUR 5.4 million to provide basic social services to migrant children and young workers in the border areas of Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire and Mali, and to empower single mothers and their children in Morocco to claim the respect of their rights and dignity.

²⁸ (ILO report "Marking progress against Child labour. Global estimates and trends 2000-2012", published on 23 September 2013).

Children's rights were the subject of discussion during the EU-Africa Summit in April 2014, where the African Union and the EU reaffirmed their willingness to protect women and children affected by armed conflicts and to prevent sexual violence particularly affecting women and children.

Progress was made on finalising a pre-deployment training module on child protection for Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) mission and operations staff.

In accordance with Article 7 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, the EU continued to raise awareness of the importance of children's access to an identity through the implementation of efficient birth registration systems, since this is a prerequisite for the enjoyment of many other rights (the right to vote, employment, access to health and education services, etc.) and provides protection against various forms of violence. The protection of children from all forms of violence remains a high priority. The EU continues to support actions to tackle harmful traditional practices and social norms that are affecting children, including female genital mutilation/cutting, child, early and forced marriage, and female infanticide. More information is available under section 20 of this report.

The EU continued to pursue its strategy for children's rights mainstreaming in all development sectors and policies, and is continuously working to ensure children's rights to quality basic services such as healthcare, education, water and sanitation, in line with the commitments undertaken for the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals. Achieving universal primary education and the "Education for All" goals aim to increase the participation of marginalised children, such as children with disabilities and children affected by stigma and socio-economic factors.

Protection of the rights of women, and protection against gender-based violence

Women's political participation and economic empowerment, initiatives against gender-based violence and harmful traditional practices, gender in development cooperation, and the implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security (see section 12) were among the areas prioritised by the EU in its relations with third countries during the reporting period.

Gender was mainstreamed in all the EU programmes and included in public messages, political and human rights dialogues with governments, and dialogues with civil society. Support to female human rights defenders and women's organisations was also a priority. Women's empowerment continued to be high on the agenda of the former HR/VP Catherine Ashton, including in her meetings with women from Syria, Iran and Ukraine. The newly appointed HR/VP Federica Mogherini underlined on several occasions, including during the Foreign Affairs Council in December, her personal commitment to maintaining gender equality and women's empowerment issues as a priority in the EU's overall external relations. The EUSR on Human Rights also continued to place major emphasis on the protection and promotion of women's rights on many occasions throughout 2014, and used his country visits and human rights dialogues to raise the issue and offer practical advice and EU expertise. Repeated engagement with women's rights leaders from strategic countries and regional organisations was also a priority for the EUSR. The EEAS Gender Adviser continued to play an important role in providing policy advice to diplomats in Headquarters and in the EU delegations, liaising with other EU institutions and international organisations and promoting consistency and coherence of action.

The EU continued to provide specialised training to diplomats on how to take gender equality issues into account in their day-to-day work and during their postings in third countries. The EU continued to mainstream its human rights and gender equality policies within the CSDP. The UN has continued to be the platform upon which the EU advances its strategic priorities, especially in the area of gender. At the 26th session of the Human Rights Council the EU co-sponsored one resolution, "Elimination of discrimination against women", and joined consensus on another, "Accelerating efforts to eliminate all forms of violence against women". The EU supported the work of UN Women, the UN Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences, and the UN Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict. During 2014 the EU and UN Women continued to implement the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU), signed in April 2012, through an agreed Work Programme. Key achievements were made in the fields of communication, policy dialogue and joint advocacy, training, and planning of joint EU-UN Women programmes.

Efforts towards mainstreaming women's rights in European Union Election Observation Missions were reinforced by the full revision of the core-team election observation guidelines relating to women's participation in the election process. At the senior electoral expert seminar held in Brussels in April 2014, gender issues were among the key subjects discussed and several concrete proposals were advanced and are being tested in missions in countries such as Guinea-Bissau and Mozambique.

As part of the joint project with UN Women to bring together women parliamentarians from the Arab States region and members of the European Parliament to foster expertise, experience sharing and networking around key issues of gender equality and women's empowerment in both the European Union and the Arab States region, the "Spring Forward for Women" conference took place in Brussels in November 2014. The EU continued to be an active partner in the Equal Futures Partnership initiative, which aims to break down barriers to women's political participation and economic empowerment.

In the reporting period another area of priority was ending sexual violence in conflict. The EU actively participated in the Global Summit to End Sexual Violence in Conflict in London in June 2014 and committed to follow up with practical actions in the areas of human rights, conflict prevention, crisis management, mediation, and humanitarian assistance. The Commission is currently also supporting several projects which aim primarily to eliminate sexual and gender-based violence and which focus on gender in emergencies in various countries, including the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Syria. During the Girl Summit in London in July, the EU pledged commitments to end female genital mutilation and child, early and forced marriage. The EU focused efforts on the implementation of the 2013 Communication on eliminating female genital mutilation (FGM)²⁹, which defines concrete measures to tackle FGM, with a strong focus on prevention and victim support. In June 2014, the Council adopted conclusions on preventing and combating all forms of violence against women and girls, including FGM.

²⁹ COM(2013)833 final.

The fourth report on the implementation of the Gender Action Plan in Development Cooperation (GAP) provides a comprehensive overview of the main ways in which the Commission supported developing countries' efforts to improve the situation of women regarding equal rights and empowerment over the past year. The report shows that gender mainstreaming has been enhanced in 20 different policy sectors, where gender-sensitive indicators are now included. In addition, the report draws attention to the importance of promoting gender equality through political dialogue. A successor to the GAP was requested by the Council in its conclusions adopted in May 2014. The Council stated that the new GAP for 2016-2020 should build on the progress made and lessons learned, and should address existing shortfalls and challenges. EU delegations have played an active role in this policy area. A majority of EU delegations (66 out of 78) report having raised gender equality at least once within the framework of political dialogue with partner countries, compared to 57 in 2013. Overall, gender is also a regular and important topic for EU dialogue with civil society organisations (CSOs) at national level. Nine EU delegations report that gender is a fixed agenda item in their regularly organised forums, while another 28 state that they hold regular meetings on gender with CSOs.

In March 2014 the 58th session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW), the UN's principal global policy-making body on gender equality and the advancement of women, took place in New York. The negotiations for this CSW focused on the priority theme "Challenges and achievements in the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals for women and girls", and resulted in the adoption of agreed conclusions. The added value of the CSW 58 agreed conclusions lay in identifying gaps in the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals, and calling for a stand-alone goal and the mainstreaming of gender issues in the future post-2015 framework. The united EU position contributed to the successful result of the CSW 58. As regards the post-2015 agenda, the Commission Communication "A Decent Life for All: From vision to collective action" (COM (2014)335), identifies "gender equality and women's empowerment" as one of the priority areas, and considers them essential conditions for sustainable development, poverty eradication and addressing the unfinished business of the MDGs.

Gender issues gained importance in relations between the EU and other international partners: with NATO, the OSCE and the Council of Europe; as part of the EU-LAC (Latin America and Caribbean) dialogue on gender issues and the Work Programme between the EU and the League of Arab States Secretariat; through the implementation of the Bandar Seri Begawan Plan of Action to strengthen the ASEAN-EU Enhanced Partnership (2013-17), which includes the promotion of gender equality and the well-being of women; and under the road map agreed between the African Union (AU) and the EU, in which a commitment to ensure the full and effective participation and representation of women in peace and security processes was made. At the fourth Africa-EU Summit, held in Brussels on 2-3 April 2014, Heads of States and Government of the EU and Africa reiterated their broad commitment to gender equality and women's empowerment. With regard to the Eastern Partnership and the Neighbouring South Region, the Commission started building a common understanding of EU commitments to gender mainstreaming, discussing country-specific challenges for gender equality and women's empowerment, and sharing ideas and best practices across sectors and delegations.

Gender has been systematically integrated into the main policy sectors of humanitarian aid (e.g. protection, shelter, food assistance, health, water, sanitation and hygiene) and on 1 January 2014 a Gender-Age Marker was introduced to foster and track gender- and age-sensitive programming by assessing to what extent each humanitarian action integrates gender and age considerations. The Gender-Age Marker also helps to ensure consistency with and the implementation of the Staff Working Document "Gender in Humanitarian Assistance: Different Needs, Adapted Assistance" (SWD (2013) 290 final), which was adopted in 2013.

The new European Instrument on Democracy and Human Rights, the thematic programme "Global Public Goods and Challenges" under the DCI and the Instrument contributing to Stability and Peace were adopted in March 2014. They all indicate non-state actors as potential beneficiaries of their projects and actions and prioritise gender equality and women's empowerment projects.

The EU continued supporting the inclusion of gender experts in mediation efforts, as well as the participation of women throughout such processes. A number of actions have already been undertaken by the EU to promote women's equal and full participation in the prevention and resolution of conflicts, peace negotiations, peace building, peacekeeping, humanitarian responses and post-conflict reconstruction. In Cote d'Ivoire the Commission contributed EUR 1 million to informal work on peace negotiations, including awareness campaigns by women's organisations supporting the role of women in the peace process and in reconciliation. The women of the West African Peace and Security Network received help from the EU to promote dialogue and exchange. In Guatemala, the Commission supported a project which trained 386 indigenous women in mediation and negotiation skills, resulting in the resolution of 100 land tenure conflicts. 4181 women participated in this process. The EU delegation to Guinea-Bissau recently started to provide support for female mediators in local conflicts through a peacebuilding programme. In the Maldives, the Commission supports a local conflict mediation project through the UN, in which 23 out of 37 trainees (62%) are women.

Compliance with international humanitarian law (IHL)

It is important to distinguish between international human rights law and IHL. They are distinct bodies of law and, while both are principally aimed at protecting individuals, there are important differences between them. In particular, IHL is applicable in time of armed conflict and occupation. Conversely, human rights law is applicable to everyone within the jurisdiction of the State concerned in time of peace as well as in time of armed conflict.

The EU is a major advocate of international humanitarian law (IHL). Within the framework of its external action, the EU continued to support the dissemination of IHL to all warring parties, including armed non-state actors. The EU continued to implement the Guidelines on IHL, adopted in 2005 and updated in 2009, which serve as a tool to promote compliance with IHL by third states and non-state actors.

During 2014, the EU, as an international organisation, continued to strive to implement the best practices prescribed by the Montreux document when contracting private security companies for the protection of EU delegations and CSDP operations. For example, it seeks to contract with companies which have signed up to the International Code of Conduct for private military and security companies (ICoC). At the Montreux Document Forum on 16 December 2014, the EU was elected to the Group of Friends of the Chair – Switzerland and the ICRC – together with the US and China. Throughout 2014, the EU continued to encourage further countries and international organisations to sign the Montreux document (to date 51 states – including 23 EU Member States – and three international organisations have signed).

The EU continued to further its advocacy for compliance with international humanitarian law within the framework of humanitarian aid in 2014. Following the adoption of UN Security Council Resolution 2139 on 22 February, Commissioner Georgieva issued a statement welcoming the resolution, which focuses on humanitarian access inside Syria, and calling for it to be translated into action on the ground. The Commissioner also took the opportunity to reiterate that all parties to the conflict should respect international humanitarian law. Throughout 2014 the Commission continued to advocate the full implementation of the resolutions related to humanitarian access and international humanitarian law inside Syria in all forums, including the High-Level Ministerial Event on the Humanitarian and Development Situation in Syria chaired by Commissioner Georgieva on 23 September, during the UN General Assembly week.

The EU and its Member States supported the Swiss/ICRC (International Committee of the Red Cross) initiative on strengthening compliance with IHL. The discussions facilitated by Switzerland and the ICRC have illustrated a widely shared consensus that the existing compliance mechanisms are neither sufficient nor adequate. The specific nature of IHL means that it warrants its own compliance mechanism.

The European Union and its Member States attended the Conference of High Contracting Parties to the Fourth Geneva Convention in Geneva on 17 December. Hosted by Switzerland, the depository of the Geneva Conventions, the conference brought together representatives of 126 High Contracting Parties to the Fourth Geneva Convention. They adopted by consensus a 10-point declaration recalling applicable international humanitarian law (IHL) in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem. The EU and its Member States delivered a statement re-emphasising their commitment to promoting compliance with international humanitarian law by all States and non-state actors. The statement reiterated the EU's position that the Fourth Geneva Convention applies to the territories occupied by Israel since the 1967 war, including the West Bank, East Jerusalem and the Gaza Strip. It also clearly stated that respect for international humanitarian law and human rights law is a cornerstone for peace and security in the region. In line with the pledge made by the EU at the 31st International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement in 2011 to pursue efforts in promoting dissemination and training in IHL in third countries, during 2014, the EU continued to provide financial support to a project enhancing the International Committee of the Red Cross's capacity to provide IHL training and dissemination for military/security forces and armed non-state actors in key conflict-affected countries, namely Iraq, Colombia and the DRC. The EU also continued to support the Swiss Foundation for Mine Action and Geneva Call, providing funding for a project to deliver training on IHL to armed non-state actors in Sudan, and a meeting of signatories of the Deeds of Commitment which aimed to review and promote the implementation of the Deeds.

The EU's two CSDP military training missions, EUTM Mali and EUTM Somalia, include IHL in their military training curricula. IHL and the wider protection of civilians has been a key concern in the implementation of the EU's other military missions, especially EUFOR RCA.

The EU remains a staunch supporter of the ICC. The EU supports the Court including, for instance, the systematic inclusion of an ICC clause into agreements with third countries and demarches with the aim to make the Rome Statute truly universal and once 3rd States have ratified, urging them – if need be – to honour their legal obligation under the treaty.

EU Member States made progress on implementing the pledges they had made at the 31st International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement in 2011. Portugal ratified the 2006 Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance on 27 January 2014 as well as Additional Protocol III to the Geneva Conventions on 22 April 2014. Sweden ratified Additional Protocol III to the Geneva Conventions on 21 August 2014. Slovakia ratified the 2006 Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance on 15 December 2014. On 12 February 2014, Estonia ratified the Optional Protocol to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict. Bulgaria, Croatia, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Malta, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain and the United Kingdom deposited their instruments of ratification of the Arms Trade Treaty on 2 April 2014, Austria, Belgium and Luxembourg on 3 June 2014, Sweden on 16 June 2014 and the Czech Republic and Portugal on 25 September 2014. Protocol V on Explosive Remnants of War to the 1980 Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons which May Be Deemed to Be Excessively Injurious or to Have Indiscriminate Effects was ratified by Greece on 21 October 2014.

The 2014 Annual Meeting of Human Rights and Gender Advisers and Focal Points for the EU's CSDP missions and operations had a special focus on the protection of civilians and the relevance of international humanitarian law.

Enjoyment of human rights by LGBTI persons

The implementation of the 2013 "Guidelines to promote and protect the enjoyment of all human rights by lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTI) persons"³⁰ was the basis of the EU actions during 2014.

On 17 May 2014, the International Day against Homophobia and Transphobia, HR/VP Ashton issued a declaration on behalf of the EU.³¹ EU delegations worldwide published the declaration and some marked the occasion by organising activities in cooperation with local civil society.

During the year the EU engaged in dialogue with several countries on the introduction of legislation discriminating against LGBTI persons, notably in Africa and Central Asia, and issued statements calling for countries such as Nigeria, Uganda and The Gambia to repeal legislation that infringes internationally agreed non-discrimination provisions.

In addition, the EU continued to advocate the promotion and protection of human rights for LGBTI persons through human rights dialogues, quiet diplomacy, EIDHR support to LGBTI human rights defenders and to NGOs implementing projects to fight discrimination against LGBTI persons, and discussions on ways to improve the situation of LGBTI persons with like-minded partners and civil society organisations. During the year LGBTI activists visiting from several countries worldwide were received in Brussels.

The EU continued to be actively engaged in multilateral efforts, notably within the UN, to tackle discrimination, including on the basis of sexual orientation or gender identity. At the HRC in Geneva the EU successfully lobbied and gathered support for the adoption of the resolution on human rights, sexual orientation and gender identity (SOGI) on 26 September 2014.

³⁰ http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_Data/docs/pressdata/EN/foraff/137584.pdf

³¹ http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_Data/docs/pressdata/EN/foraff/142615.pdf

In different UN fora, the EU works to ensure that all persons, including LGBTI persons, enjoy all human rights without discrimination. In September at the 69th General Assembly in New York, the cross-regional LGBTI core group, which includes the EU and some of its Member States, organised a ministerial side event focusing on human rights for LGBTI persons. The EU actively contributed to a human rights related event for LGBTI persons, together with the UN, within the framework of the UN's Free & Equal campaign. In May the EU organised a panel discussion with civil society during the EIDHR forum, with a specific focus on Africa. Together with the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office, and the NGOs HIVOS and the Baring Foundation, the EU also supported a Wilton Park Conference in the UK in September 2014 on promoting the human rights of LGBTI persons.

Under the EIDHR, the EU is supporting several projects aimed at protecting LGBTI persons, for example by empowering organisations to challenge homophobic laws and discrimination against LGBTI persons, raising awareness among the general public about the discrimination and violence experienced by sexual minorities, combating violence against and providing emergency assistance for the most vulnerable LGBTI persons (from psychosocial and medical assistance to mediation and reintegration). The last EIDHR global call, "Combatting discrimination", contained a specific lot on LGBTI issues (EUR 5 million). Projects were selected in 2014, with implementation scheduled to start at the beginning of 2015.

Freedom of religion or belief

One year after the adoption of the EU guidelines on freedom of religion or belief (FoRB) in June 2013, the EU continued to focus on this challenged fundamental freedom worldwide. The EU reaffirmed its determination to defend FoRB as a right to be exercised by everyone everywhere, based on the principles of equality, non-discrimination and universality.

The issue of violence being one of the priority areas of action highlighted in the FoRB guidelines, the EU gave particular attention to its occurrence during the year. Violent incidents and terrorist attacks targeting individuals, people belonging to religious communities or religious sites on the grounds of religion or belief have been condemned through diplomatic action, statements and Foreign Affairs Council conclusions. The EU also highlighted blatant violations of freedom of religion or belief. Specific situations in Syria, Iraq, the Central African Republic, Nigeria, Iran, Burma/Myanmar, Sudan, Pakistan and Brunei have been of particular concern at different levels. In Iraq and Syria, the EU was particularly shocked by atrocities and abuses of basic human rights, in particular when committed against people belonging to targeted religious minorities and the most vulnerable groups, and underlined the need for safeguarding the multi-ethnic and multi-religious character of those countries. In the Central African Republic (CAR), further to its diplomatic and military engagement to stop the fighting and restore security throughout the country, the EU reaffirmed its commitment to the peaceful coexistence of the different communities and religions in the country. The EU is notably doing so in the CAR by training religious leaders and civil society in conflict prevention and intercommunity dialogue.

As in previous years, freedom of religion or belief was systematically raised with many partners at different levels of political dialogue, including in human rights dialogues and consultations. The EU was particularly active in the case of Meriam Yahya Ibrahim, a Christian who had been sentenced to death in Sudan for adultery and apostasy. A joint statement³² was issued by the Presidents of the Commission, European Parliament and Council together with 20 religious leaders, including Muslims. The EU was at the forefront of the international efforts that ultimately helped in her acquittal and release.

³² http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_STATEMENT-14-186_en.htm

In multilateral fora, the EU focused on consolidating the content of FoRB resolutions both in the HRC and in the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA). In the March 2014 HRC session (HRC 25), the EU-led resolution on freedom of religion or belief was adopted by consensus. The resolution included a reference to the Special Rapporteur's report on the need to tackle manifestations of collective religious hatred. The explicit language on the right "not to have" a religion, which was introduced for the first time in the 2013 resolution, was confirmed. In the margins of HRC 25, the EU delegation in Geneva organised a side event with the Special Rapporteur on FoRB, Mr. Heiner Bielefeldt, to explore how to tackle religious hatred within the current international human rights framework.

At the 69th session of the UNGA, the EU-led resolution on FoRB was also adopted by consensus. The EU achieved its main objective of focusing on the protection of people belonging to religious communities and minorities around the world, ensuring the inclusion of an explicit reference to religious extremism that affects the rights of individuals, as well as a call to states to provide adequate protection to persons and communities at risk of violent attack on the grounds of their religion or belief.

The EU continued to engage with the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) on the implementation of resolution 16/18³³, and took part in the 4th Istanbul Process meeting held in Doha in March 2014. Hosted by the Government of Qatar and the Doha International Centre for Interfaith Collaboration, the meeting focused on "advancing religious freedom through interfaith collaboration". The event – which was the first to be organised in a Muslim country and the first to which NGOs and non-state actors were invited – was well attended by scholars and civil society organisations, but very few state representatives were present to give an update on the implementation of the resolution.

³³ "Combating intolerance, negative stereotyping and stigmatisation of, and discrimination, incitement to violence and violence against, persons based on religion or belief".

As far as the EU's financial instruments are concerned, the promotion of freedom of religion or belief as a fundamental freedom, the protection of persons belonging to minorities and the fight against discrimination remained funding priorities under the EIDHR. According to Article 2.1b (v) the EU's assistance shall focus on "*freedom of thought, conscience and religion or belief, including by means of measures to eliminate all forms of hatred, intolerance and discrimination based on religion or belief and by fostering tolerance and respect for religious and cultural diversity within and among societies*".

The global call for proposals on combating discrimination, launched in 2013, was concluded. Out of a total allocation of EUR 20 million, EUR 5 million has been specifically dedicated to supporting projects to promote FoRB and combat discrimination on the grounds of religion or belief. Most of the funded projects will start in the course of 2015.

In past years, FoRB has also been promoted through other EIDHR channels, such as local Country Based Support Scheme (CBSS) calls managed by EU Delegations, global calls to enhance respect for human rights and their defenders where they are most at risk, and small grants in support of human rights defenders (HRDs). In 2014, CBSS calls that included FoRB as one of the priority areas were launched in Armenia, Indonesia, Kazakhstan and Sri Lanka. In other countries, such as Egypt, the call addressed "the rights of vulnerable/marginalised groups", which could have encompassed FoRB even though it was not explicitly mentioned.

Freedom of expression online and offline

On 12 May 2014, the Foreign Affairs Council adopted the EU Human Rights Guidelines on Freedom of Expression Online and Offline. Building upon existing instruments and documents, these Guidelines reiterate key principles and contain clearly defined priorities and tools for EU delegations and Member State embassies, as well as EU headquarters, so that they can better promote and defend this right.

The Commission services and the EEAS organised a number of events to promote the Guidelines. On 22 September 2014 the EU organised a side event on freedom of expression online in the margins of the Human Dimension Implementation Meeting 2014, organised by the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights in Warsaw. The annual EU-NGO Human Rights Forum, held on 4 and 5 December 2014, was fully dedicated to the protection and promotion of freedom of expression. The Commission services and the EEAS promoted the Guidelines in all EU delegations, in order to raise awareness but also to inform all future planning of financial support.

The EU repeatedly condemned attacks against journalists and bloggers through public statements and in the framework of the EU's bilateral relations with third countries. Through its bilateral human rights dialogues, the EU informed third countries of the adoption of the Guidelines and encouraged steps to be taken to prevent violence and harassment and to promote a safe environment for journalists and other media professionals, enabling them to carry out their work independently, without undue interference and without fear of violence or persecution.

The EU is committed to increasing international efforts to promote freedom of expression and closely followed the work of the Freedom Online Coalition, the HRC resolution on the safety of journalists, the UNGA resolution on the right to privacy in the digital age, and the resolution on human rights and the internet adopted for the second time by the HRC in summer 2014.

The EU is also actively engaged in debates on Internet and human rights, for instance at the Internet Governance Forum (IGF) and within the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) + 10 review. The EU has recently progressed in international cyber policy areas, for example most recently with the Communication from the European Commission "Internet Policy and Governance - Europe's role in shaping the future of Internet Governance" (COM/2014/072) the Council Conclusions on Internet Governance³⁴ adopted on 27 November 2014 (16200/14), the Resolution of the European Parliament on the renewal of the IGF mandate (2015/2526(RSP)) and the Council Conclusions on Cyber Diplomacy³⁵ adopted on 10 February 2015 which all reflect the need of protecting human rights online.

The Commission is currently implementing the projects for the main technical platform of the Global Internet Policy Observatory "GIPO". The main objective is the technical development of an online web-based platform for monitoring internet-related policy, regulatory and technological developments across the world, to help to increase expertise and understanding among all actors, particularly more disadvantaged stakeholders - including those countries, NGOs and interest groups which may feel marginalised in Internet governance debates and decisions. The contract for the development of the platform was signed at the end of 2014.

Work also continues on the development of another project of the European Commission, namely on the "European Capability for Situational Awareness" (ECSA) platform. The purpose of the ECSA platform is to augment EU decision-making capabilities with reliable and real-time or almost real-time information concerning human rights violations and/or restrictions of fundamental freedoms in connection with the digital environment.

³⁴ <http://italia2014.eu/media/3769/council-conclusions-on-internet-governance.pdf>

³⁵ <http://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-6122-2015-INIT/en/pdf>

In order to further stimulate the implementation of the Guidelines, the Commission prepared a new programme (EUR 4.55 million financed by the EIDHR) in support of the media and freedom of expression in democracy pilot countries, which aims to assist both the delegations and the media in third countries in applying the Guidelines in their policy actions and operations. Emphasis was put on coherence between the EU's support for democracy and for freedom of expression. The Guidelines informed all quality-support reviews of new development cooperation projects in the area of freedom of expression. The Commission adopted new projects/programmes; for example in Tunisia ("*Appui aux secteurs des médias tunisiens*", EUR 10 million) and Algeria ("*Programme d'appui aux médias*", EUR 7.3 million) under the European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument.

Implementation of the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights

In 2014 the EU maintained its commitment to implementing the Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights (UNGPs), endorsed in 2011 by the UN Human Rights Council. The UNGPs cover the State's duty to protect human rights, the responsibility of corporations to respect them, and access to legal remedies. The EU continued working to ensure that the Guiding Principles are adhered to, both within the EU and through its external action.

The European Commission has also published guidance on implementing the UNGPs in three business sectors (ICT, recruitment agencies, oil and gas) in 2013.

The European Commission continued the preparation of a Staff Working Document on Business and Human Rights, with the purpose of providing an analysis of what has been achieved – both within the EU and in its external action – since the adoption of the Communication on Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) in 2011 (COM(2011)681). As part of the CSR policy review the Commission held a public consultation on corporate social responsibility, along with a Multi-Stakeholder Forum on CSR which attracted over 500 participants from a range of sectors. A CSR Coordination Committee, chaired by the European Commission, met several times in 2014. Members of the CSR Coordination Committee include business/industry, civil society and international organisations; the objective of the Committee is to share positions, strengthen policy and enhance multi-stakeholder dialogue on responsible business conduct. A joint meeting with the CSR Coordination Committee and the CSR High Level Group (EU Member States) was held in December 2014. Such initiatives facilitated both the EU's policy development on CSR and the implementation of the UNGPs.

EU Member States moved forward in the process of adopting national action plans on business and human rights (and corporate social responsibility), which they have agreed to produce as part of their commitments under the Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy. By the end of 2014 six EU Member States had adopted such plans, several other EU Member States were in advanced stages of preparing national action plans on business and human rights and/or corporate social responsibility. The Commission continued the peer review of Member States' CSR activities, including those relating to business and human rights. A compendium outlining Member States' CSR activities was prepared and published in late 2014.

In October the EU adopted a Directive on the disclosure of non-financial and diversity information by companies and groups with more than 500 employees (Directive 2014/95/EU), with a view to enhancing their transparency. The companies concerned will disclose information on policies, risks and results as regards respect for human rights, anti-corruption and bribery issues, and diversity on their boards of directors, among other things. The proposal aims to strengthen the existing EU legislation, which already requires the inclusion of environmental and employee-related information in the companies' annual reports.

As part of its external action, the European Commission and the EEAS discussed the issue and exchanged best practices with a growing number of third countries, in particular in Asia and Latin America, and including Mexico, Ecuador, Peru and Indonesia. In 2014, the EUSR for Human Rights focused on business and human rights as a key priority in his activities and in his discussions with strategic partners, such as South Africa and Brazil. In Brazil he also chaired a seminar for companies on business and human rights.

As a follow-up to the 2013 EU-African Union (AU) Human Rights Dialogue, the two institutions held a joint seminar in Addis Ababa in September. The EEAS, the Commission services and several EU Member States exchanged views, expertise and their experience in implementation actions which facilitate responsible business conduct. All parties pledged to promote and implement the UNGPs in their respective regions and to work on areas of potential cooperation. The Commission agreed to provide technical and financial support to the development of an AU framework on promoting responsible business conduct in Africa.

The EU-CELAC (Latin America and Caribbean) cooperation in responsible business continued in 2014. Following the first EU-CELAC seminar on CSR in October 2013, a high-level officials meeting on CSR took place in San José in November, hosted by the CELAC presidency (Costa Rica). The objective was to learn more from the experience of the European Union and its Member States, with the view of accelerating the development of CSR national action plans in the CELAC countries. An EU-CELAC Summit will be held in June 2015 (Brussels) to continue the dialogue on corporate social responsibility.

Within the multilateral framework, the EU closely followed discussions and developments on this issue in the HRC, and actively supported the resolution renewing the mandate of the Working Group on Human Rights and Transnational Corporations and other Enterprises, adopted by unanimity at the June session. Overall, the EU remained supportive of a consensual track.

Accordingly, it did not support the Ecuador- and South Africa-backed resolution establishing an Inter-Governmental Working Group (IGWG) to prepare a legally binding international instrument. The EU also regretted that the de facto focus of that resolution would be transnational corporations, whereas many human rights abuses are committed by enterprises at the domestic level.

The third UN Forum on Business and Human Rights took place in Geneva in December 2014, under the auspices of the relevant Working Group. The Forum attracted more than 2000 representatives from government organisations, NGOs, trade unions and business organisations, with increased business participation as compared to the previous year. The EU was represented by the EU Special Representative for Human Rights and the European Commission. The EU outlined its strong commitment and active implementation of the Guiding Principles.

The EU continued promoting CSR practices within the framework of the trade and sustainable development chapters of its Free Trade Agreements.

Administration of justice

Throughout the year the EU continued to support a comprehensive approach to the work on rule of law issues at the United Nations, making proposals at the UN General Assembly on how to enhance the links between the rule of law and the three main pillars of the United Nations (peace and security, development and human rights). In the context of the discussions on the post-2015 Development Agenda, notably in an informal interactive debate in the General Assembly, the EU underlined that human rights and the rule of law were critical to achieving poverty eradication and sustainable development, and should have a central place in the new framework alongside the principles of non-discrimination, equality, participation and accountability.

The EU also submitted a report to the UN Secretariat on the implementation of the pledges on the rule of law made at the UNGA High-Level Meeting on the rule of law at the national and international levels on 24 September 2012.

In its bilateral relations with third countries, the EU continued to promote the rule of law and raised issues pertaining to the administration of justice, including the functioning and resourcing of the justice system, the organisation and independence of the judiciary, the right to a fair trial and rights of defendants. Where relevant, the EU continued to encourage and support legislative and institutional reforms, for instance of criminal codes and the penitentiary system, as well as capacity building and activities aimed at improving access to justice, including for women.

Support to the justice sector and the rule of law more broadly is an important area of cooperation in many countries benefiting from EU assistance. It is closely connected to the promotion of democratic governance, human rights, gender equality, citizen security and socio-economic development.

Trial monitoring remained an essential element of the EU's work to support human rights defenders and, throughout the year, diplomats from EU delegations and EU Member States' missions monitored a large number of judicial proceedings in a broad range of countries. The visible presence of EU representatives in courtrooms served as a clear demonstration to the government, civil society and the general public of the EU's interest in the cases concerned, and in the administration of justice more generally. Given the length of proceedings, and the fact that the courts concerned were often located outside capital cities, burden sharing between EU delegations and the embassies of EU Member States was particularly important. The EU also made a number of statements supporting human rights defenders on trial and raising due process issues.

Responding to violations: ensuring accountability

The EU and its Member States continued their support of the International Criminal Court (ICC), including with regard to the preservation of its independence as well as the universality and integrity of the Rome Statute, in accordance with Council Decision 2011/168/CFSP of 21 March 2011. The Court's mandate to punish the perpetrators of the most inhumane crimes imaginable, in cases where the State concerned is unwilling or genuinely unable to carry out the investigation or prosecution, the ICC becomes an essential contributor to international peace and security. In 2014, a further five EU Member States ratified or accepted the Kampala amendments on the crime of aggression and to Article 8 of the Rome Statute of the ICC.

The EU and its Member States remained committed to supporting the independence of the ICC and its effective and efficient functioning, including during the ICC Assembly of States Parties, which was held in New York from 8 to 17 December 2014. In particular, the EU supported the preservation of the Court's judicial and prosecutorial independence. The ICC must remain an independent and impartial judicial institution with no political goals to pursue.

The EU maintained its systematic démarche campaigns in support of the ICC, encouraging the widest possible participation in the Rome Statute (see section 4).

The EU and its Member States continued to work towards preserving the Rome Statute's integrity. In this respect, the abolition of all immunities, even of heads of State, in trials before the ICC was an essential achievement in international criminal justice. The EU and its Member States continued to support the effective and efficient functioning of the Court and EU Member States continued to be among its major donors. The EU provided additional direct (projects with the Court) and indirect (projects with civil society) financial support to the Court by fostering legal cooperation and the exchange of best practices between state parties and non-state parties, and the legal community.

The EU reacted to acts of non-cooperation with the Court and reiterated how important it was for all Member States of the United Nations abiding by and implementing the resolutions adopted by the Security Council, under Chapter VII of the UN Charter, to refer situations to the Court. The EU stressed that non-cooperation constitutes one of the most serious challenges to the effective functioning of the ICC.

The EU and its Member States continued to pursue the aim of creating a holistic and integrated approach through increased capacity development initiatives at national level, not least by promoting the fight against impunity in development cooperation and technical assistance programmes. To this end, the EEAS and Commission services continued the implementation of the internal joint staff working document on advancing the principle of complementarity, which aims to bridge the gap between international and national justice.

On the basis of the 2006 Agreement between the ICC and the EU on cooperation and assistance, a first joint EU-ICC roundtable was set up to consult and to ensure regular exchange on matters of mutual interest, including cooperation, complementarity, diplomatic support and mainstreaming, as well as public information and outreach.

During 2014, the EU remained active in the field of transitional justice, engaging with countries in transition through mediation activities, political dialogues and CSDP missions. A draft EU policy on transitional justice is under development and is likely to be adopted in early 2015, publicly demonstrating the EU's commitment to transitional justice, strengthening the coherence and consistency of the EU's engagement on transitional justice and providing guidance to EU and EU Member State staff working on transitional justice issues.

The EU continued strengthening the national judicial response to international crimes in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Côte d'Ivoire. The EU worked closely with the UN (in particular the Special Rapporteur for the promotion of truth, justice, reparations and guarantees of non-recurrence), regional organisations and civil society in supporting transitional justice.

Promote respect for the rights of persons belonging to minorities (including the prevention of racism and xenophobia)

In 2014 minority issues continued to figure on the EU's external relations agenda. The EU contributed to the promotion and protection of the rights of persons belonging to minorities by joining forces with the United Nations and other international and multilateral organisations such as the OSCE and Council of Europe. In its bilateral relations the EU consistently raised the rights of persons belonging to minorities during human rights dialogues with partner countries. At the UN, the EU followed and supported the UN Forum on Minority Issues where the Special Rapporteur's report on Minority Issues, "Preventing and addressing violence and atrocity crimes against minorities", was on the agenda.

The EU was active at the multilateral level in specific cases affecting particular ethnic or religious groups. During the 69th session of UN General Assembly, the EU actively supported a resolution on Myanmar/Burma that expressed strong concern for the Rohingya and urged the Government of Myanmar to accelerate its efforts to address human rights violations.

In 2014, the EU provided political support to the OSCE Commissioner on National Minorities, who has been very active in conflict-prone areas where minority issues are central. The Commissioner's stand on the situation in Ukraine, especially as regards the Tatar minority in Crimea, is fully aligned with the EU's position. The EU also expressed its support for the Commissioner's work to promote the application of the Ljubljana Guidelines on Integration of Diverse Societies. The Ljubljana Guidelines are a set of guiding principles to assist States in formulating and implementing policies to facilitate the integration of diverse societies.

Financial support for minority issues is provided through the geographical instruments as well as through the EIDHR. As a result of the EIDHR calls for proposals in 2013, anti-discrimination projects amounting to EUR 20 million were contracted in 2014.

The prevention of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance is an important EU priority. On 21 March 2014, the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, former High Representative Ashton issued a declaration on behalf of the EU urging further action to tackle all forms of intolerance, racism, xenophobia and related discrimination. In particular, she called on States to take determined and effective measures at the national, regional, and international levels, and for States that had not done so, to ratify and fully implement the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (ICERD). The EU continued to raise racism and xenophobia-related issues in its political dialogues with third countries. This was the case with South Africa, for instance, where an agreement was made to cooperate further on this matter.

At the multilateral level, the EU also actively cooperated with the UN in tackling racism and discrimination. In 2014, the UN Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance issued a report on discrimination and intolerance in the world of sports. The report indicates that despite progress in recent years, racism in sports has proved to be a resilient phenomenon. The EU has expressed its full support for the report's recommendations that all stakeholders should take on the responsibility of raising awareness of existing patterns of discrimination while continuing to support initiatives to fight intolerance in the world of sports. The EU also continued to cooperate with regional bodies such as the Council of Europe's European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI) and the OSCE. The Commission also provided financial support through the EIDHR in order to address this issue in partner countries.

Thirteen years after the World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance, the EU remains fully committed to the principal objective of the 2001 Durban Conference, which is the total elimination of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance.

An enhanced policy on indigenous issues

On 22-23 September 2014, the first ever United Nations World Conference on Indigenous Peoples was held in New York as a high-level plenary of the General Assembly. The objective of the conference was to share perspectives on the realisation of the rights of indigenous peoples as proclaimed in the 2007 UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

The EU contributed actively and visibly to the World Conference by paying particular attention to the full and effective participation of indigenous peoples in the Conference by coordinated EU-Member States action towards the consensus adoption of an action-orientated Outcome Document for the Conference, and by organising a successful side event on monitoring indigenous people's rights.

The EU Special Representative for Human Rights participated in the opening plenary of the World Conference and delivered the EU statement. He welcomed more focused action on the rights of indigenous peoples and declared that the EU would commit to the implementation of the decisions and recommendations of the Outcome Document. He also made reference to the United Nations post-2015 Development Agenda, stressing that respect for the rights and well-being of indigenous peoples is closely intertwined with the objectives of global sustainable development.

Building upon the results of the Conference, the EEAS, in cooperation with the Commission services, initiated a review with the aim of developing a strengthened EU policy on indigenous peoples, as foreseen by the 2012 Human Rights Action Plan. The purpose of the review is to contextualise EU policies in the light of past decades' developments, including the adoption of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, and the realities of today as reflected in the Outcome Document of the World Conference on Indigenous Peoples.

In its bilateral relations with partner countries, the rights of indigenous peoples were raised in the human rights dialogues with those countries that have indigenous peoples. The dialogues also took account of the fact that indigenous peoples and individuals often face multiple forms of discrimination. Many indigenous individuals are discriminated against not only because they are indigenous, but also for other reasons such as poverty, gender, sexual orientation or disability.

Indigenous peoples and their leaders in particular, continue to be subjected to grave human rights abuses when defending their lands and resources from encroachment ("land grabbing"). The EU has also addressed this phenomenon in the context of the agenda for business and human rights.

Indigenous peoples have been recognised as eligible beneficiaries of the EIDHR since EU support for human rights began. However, only with the new EIDHR Regulation in 2014 was explicit reference made to the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) as the normative framework for promoting and protecting the human rights of indigenous peoples. Following the new EIDHR, the Commission has renewed a contract for a project dealing with indigenous peoples' access to justice and development through strategic monitoring of the implementation of the UNDRIP, along with a project to support the ILO's work in Nepal, Cameroon and Peru to build capacity among rights holders and stakeholders for the implementation of ILO Convention No 169 on indigenous and tribal peoples.

Human rights for persons with disabilities

The EU has been a party to the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) since January 2011. In its internal as well as external action the EU is committed to promoting the rights of persons with disabilities in line with the CRPD.

In 2014 an important step for CRPD implementation was the preparation by the European Commission of the first EU report to the UN as required under Article 35 of the CRPD. The report was submitted to the UN in June³⁶ for consideration by the UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in 2015. It describes how the EU has been implementing the CRPD through legislation, policy actions and funding instruments. It addresses all rights and obligations enshrined in the CRPD across a wide range of policy fields, including international cooperation, development programmes and humanitarian aid. Consideration of the report will take place during the 14th session of the UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in August-September 2015.

³⁶ SWD(2014) 182 final: http://ec.europa.eu/justice/discrimination/files/swd_2014_182_en.pdf

The EU's external disability policy is guided by the EU Disability Strategy for 2010-2020, adopted by the European Commission in 2010, and is one of the areas of activity addressed in the EU Strategic Framework and Action Plan for Human Rights and Democracy. In 2014 the EU continued to include the rights of persons with disabilities across the full spectrum of its external policies, such as dialogue with partner countries, multilateral forums, development cooperation, enlargement negotiations, neighbourhood policy, and emergency and humanitarian aid.

Issues related to the rights of persons with disabilities were raised in human rights dialogues with the African Union, Indonesia and Mexico, among others. Moreover, the EU called for the ratification and full implementation of the CRPD by all States, while commending States that signed and ratified the CRPD in 2014.

The EU also continued to uphold and advocate respect for the human rights of persons with disabilities in the relevant regional and international forums.

In particular the Commission, as the focal point for the EU's implementation of the CRPD, represented the EU in the seventh session of the Conference of State Parties to the CRPD on 10-12 June 2014 in New York and delivered a statement during the General Debate and two interventions at the round tables on development cooperation and implementation and monitoring. The EU also organised, with the European Disability Forum, a side event on 12 June on promoting the human rights of persons with disabilities in the world through development cooperation.

The Commission continued to protect and promote the rights of persons with disabilities in the Union's external action through European development cooperation, both through disability-specific projects (over 103 projects were funded in 51 countries with a budget of over EUR 34 million) and through mainstreaming the concerns of persons with disabilities in other projects and programmes. The Development Cooperation Instrument, the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights and the Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance include explicit provisions for promoting the social inclusion and rights of persons with disabilities.

The EU has advocated the inclusion of the rights of persons with disabilities in the post-2015 development framework both through its position in the negotiations towards the Sustainable Development Goals and through the organisation of events such as the side event "Include Persons with Disabilities in Sustainable Development Processes" organised at the UN in February 2014, or the side event on development cooperation organised in the margins of the Conference of State Parties to the CRPD in June 2014.

VI Working with bilateral partners

Impact on the ground through tailored approaches

Human rights country strategies (HRCSs) are policy documents which are elaborated by the EU delegation, in coordination with Member States at local level in order to rationalise and integrate the application of EU human rights guidelines, toolboxes or action plans into one coherent text. The objective is to have a better understanding of key human rights challenges and to focus EU action on key priorities in partner countries, both in policy and financial assistance terms, allowing the EU to better tailor the Union's approach to each country's situation.

Thanks to the concerted efforts of EU delegations, EU institutions, Heads of Missions (HoMs) and Member States, 132 HRCSs have been endorsed by the PSC.

The implementation of the HRCSs has led to more intense collaboration on human rights between the EU delegations and Member States' embassies. In a number of countries this has led to the setting up of dedicated human rights working groups at country level, often composed of both political counsellors and officials of the EU delegation's cooperation section. Increased information-sharing and a more effective division of labour between local EU partners are a direct result of these working groups. The HRCSs have also become an important information tool to support the EU in the preparation of the Universal Periodic Review rounds for any given country, and EU human rights dialogues.

Engagement with civil society was encouraged during the implementation process and several delegations have seen an intensification of their contacts on human rights issues. The HRCSs remain restricted documents, but COHOM has developed a common understanding on a public diplomacy approach for HRCSs and provided guidance to EU Delegations and EU Member State HoMs on this issue.

Implementation reports were requested from EU delegations in 2012, 2013 and 2014. These reports also showed increased cooperation between Member States and EU delegations on the implementation of the HRCSs and how on many occasions the HRCSs have been mainstreamed into EU cooperation projects.

Impact through dialogue

The EU values human rights dialogues with third countries as efficient tools for bilateral engagement and cooperation in the promotion and protection of human rights.

Over the years, human rights dialogues have been established with an increasing number of countries. Formal human rights dialogues, subcommittees or consultations took place with 35 partners in 2014.³⁷ In addition, the EU continued to engage in dialogue on respect for human rights, democratic principles, the rule of law and good governance with many of the 79 African, Caribbean and Pacific countries that are party to the Cotonou Agreement, based on Article 8 of the Agreement or by other means.

³⁷ Human rights dialogues or subcommittees were held with Armenia, Azerbaijan, Brazil, Cambodia, Chile, China, Colombia, Georgia, Indonesia, Israel, Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic, Laos, Lebanon, Mexico, Republic of Moldova, Morocco, Myanmar/Burma, Pakistan, the Palestinian Authority, Peru (technical level), South Africa, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Ukraine and Uzbekistan. Consultations on human rights took place with Canada, Japan, New Zealand, the US and candidate countries (former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Iceland, Montenegro, Serbia and Turkey). It was not possible to hold sessions of the established human rights dialogues with Argentina, Egypt, Iraq, Russia or Sri Lanka in 2014. The sessions with Azerbaijan, Bangladesh, India, Jordan, Tunisia and Vietnam were postponed to 2015. The human rights dialogue with Iran has been suspended since 2006.

The first human rights dialogue with Myanmar/Burma was held in 2014. The establishment of official human rights dialogues is now an option with Mongolia, Singapore and the Philippines in the framework of the Partnership and Cooperation Agreements agreed with the EU.

In 2014, the EU continued to work to increase the effectiveness of dialogues. To do so, it ensured closer links between dialogues and other policy instruments, notably human rights country strategies; recommendations from the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) at the UN Human Rights Council, Treaty Monitoring Bodies and Special Procedures were taken into account; cooperation on human rights with the EU's "like-minded" partners were strengthened; dialogues were better embedded in the overall relationship with the third country concerned, and attention was given to their follow-up through action plans, legislative reforms and projects which the EU can support through its instruments, including cooperation assistance. Furthermore, individual cases were raised, whilst the EU was responsive to requests from partner countries to discuss EU internal human rights issues, in cooperation with EU Member States. EU and local civil society organisations were involved in the preparation and follow-up of human rights dialogues; in 2014, nine dedicated seminars for civil society organisations were held to feed into the official human rights dialogues³⁸. Finally, the European Parliament contributed input to the dialogues and was regularly debriefed on their outcomes.

³⁸ In the HR Dialogues with Brazil, Chile, Colombia, the Kyrgyz Republic, Mexico, Republic of Moldova, Myanmar/Burma, South Africa and Tajikistan.

Effective use and interplay of EU external policy instruments

The inclusion of a human rights, democracy and rule of law clause (essential elements clause) in EU agreements with third countries is intended to promote the EU's values and political principles, which constitute the basis for its external relations. This clause represents the core of EU values and is defined as an essential element of the agreements. The major violation of an essential element allows a party to take immediate measures including, as a last resort, the suspension of an agreement or parts thereof.

In 2014, the EU continued to engage in dialogue with many of the 79 African, Caribbean and Pacific countries that are party to the Cotonou Agreement (see section 32). Article 96 allows for the adoption of appropriate measures, including (as a last resort) the suspension of the cooperation, with regard to the country in question. At the end of 2014, such appropriate measures remained applicable to Fiji, and Guinea Bissau (in this latter case the application of the appropriate measures being suspended).

The human rights clause was not used as the basis for new restrictive measures against any third country in 2014.

VII Working through multilateral institutions

Advancing effective multilateralism

The EU continued to be a vocal advocate of human rights, and lent 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. The EU translated its human rights priorities into action at the Third Committee of the United Nations General Assembly, the United Nations Human Rights Council, and UN specialised agencies such as the ILO. The EU also actively engaged countries from all regions on initiatives that genuinely contributed to the protection and promotion of human rights, and committed to working at the UN to promote and protect the universality of human rights. The EU continued to use an annual strategic work plan and regular discussions at COHOM capitals meetings to make its participation in these forums even more effective. It further consolidated burden-sharing arrangements and EU coordination in Geneva and New York, in addition to regular bilateral dialogues and enhanced outreach on EU priorities. The EU also welcomed the appointment of Mr Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein as the new UN High Commissioner for Human Rights. Mr Al Hussein has a proven track record at the UN, in human rights and as a strong advocate of international justice.

Effective burden sharing in the UN context

69th session of the UN General Assembly (Third Committee)

The Third Committee (Social, Humanitarian and Cultural Affairs) of the 69th session of the UN General Assembly met from 7 October to 26 November, and its results were confirmed by the UN Plenary in December 2014.

Overall the Committee dealt with roughly 60 resolutions, and the EU was very active, delivering nine formal statements and intervening in more than 45 interactive dialogues with UN officials, human rights mandate holders and the new High Commissioner for Human Rights. The EU also presented five initiatives, which were all adopted with significant support.

The cross-regional resolution on a moratorium on the use of the death penalty was adopted with 117 votes in favour, which is a better result than in 2012 (when it received 111 votes), and 95 delegations co-sponsored the resolution. A "hostile amendment" on sovereignty was rejected, which is also an improvement on 2012. At the plenary meeting the vote count improved even further. The result demonstrates that the global trend towards the abolition of the death penalty is continuing. The EU's initiatives on freedom of religion and belief and the joint initiative with the Group of Latin American and Caribbean States (GRULAC) on the rights of the child were adopted by consensus. The EU also supported partners' thematic initiatives, in particular the resolutions on intensifying efforts to eliminate all forms of violence against women and girls, as well as the African-led resolutions against female genital mutilation and child, early and forced marriage. During their presentations to the Committee, many UN human rights mandate holders drew attention to the increasing intimidation, harassment and reprisals against human rights defenders that have cooperated with the UN over human rights. Restrictions on civil society activity – something the EU strongly condemns and discusses with partners in bilateral relations – were also raised.

Regarding country situations, the resolution, put forward by the EU and Japan, on the situation of human rights in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea was adopted with broad cross-regional support. This was significantly stronger language than in previous versions, but the outcome was similar to that achieved when the text was last voted upon in 2011: a real success. Before adoption, a "hostile amendment" tabled by Cuba seeking to delete the proposed ICC referral was defeated, and overall the resolution increased the number of co-sponsors to 62, from countries in all regions, including Africa, Asia and Latin America.

For the third year running the EU-led resolution on Myanmar/Burma was adopted by consensus after a cooperative process with the country concerned and other interested parties. The EU also supported a number of partner initiatives, including country resolutions on Iran (led by Canada) and Syria (Arab-led). Despite the continuing human rights concerns regarding Iran, this text was adopted with a slightly less positive result than last year while the resolution on the Syria text was adopted by an overwhelming majority, similarly to previous such votes.

Active lobbying in over 130 capitals and New York-based outreach contributed to the positive results of the session and also served as entry point for the engagement of third countries on the wider human rights agenda.

United Nations Human Rights Council

The United Nations Human Rights Council had another busy year in 2014, with the EU playing an active and pivotal role, particularly in relation to country resolutions and thematic issues such as freedom of religion or belief and the rights of the child. It also participated fully in the dialogues and negotiations, presenting a united front on most resolutions.

At the Council's March session, the EU tabled resolutions on Myanmar/Burma and, alongside Japan, on the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK). The DPRK resolution included a list of all the crimes against humanity identified by the Commission of Inquiry (CoI) and recommended that the CoI report be submitted via the General Assembly to the Security Council for its consideration and appropriate action, including consideration of whether to refer the human rights situation to the appropriate international criminal justice mechanism. The Myanmar/Burma resolution identified the progress and reforms achieved, whilst also highlighting the remaining challenges. Both resolutions extended the mandates of the respective Special Rapporteurs. The EU also supported resolutions on Syria and Mali, the former condemning the human rights situation in the country and renewing the CoI, and the latter extending the mandate of the Independent Expert on human rights in Mali. The EU also pursued initiatives on freedom of religion or belief and, with GRULAC, on the rights of the child. As in previous years, the EU supported a resolution extending the mandate of the Special Rapporteur on Iran.

In June, the EU presented another resolution concerning the situation in Belarus, reflecting the findings from the Special Rapporteur's 2014 report on the human rights situation in the country, and making reference to the country's use of the death penalty. As in March, the Council adopted a resolution on the situation in Syria that condemned the deterioration of human rights in the country and called for immediate and unfettered access to Syria for the CoI. The EU also supported a cooperative resolution on Ukraine that reaffirmed the country's sovereignty and independence, and called for the protection of all human rights in the country.

The EU was particularly active in supporting the important thematic work of the HRC, co-sponsoring resolutions on extreme poverty and human rights, the elimination of discrimination against women, and the promotion, protection, and enjoyment of human rights on the internet. It also co-sponsored resolutions to extend the mandates of four Special Rapporteurs responsible for reporting on the following issues: the independence of judges and lawyers; trafficking in persons, especially women and children; extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions; and the right to education.

In September, the Council took the opportunity to welcome the new High Commissioner, Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein, who confirmed many of his predecessor's priorities, whilst putting a specific focus on accountability and speaking out strongly against violence. The EU supported a number of initiatives, including country resolutions on Syria, Yemen and the Central African Republic. It also put its full weight behind a number of thematic issues, most notably the rights of LGBTI persons, but also resolutions relating to the safety of journalists, child mortality, civil society space and the use of national institutions for the promotion and protection of human rights.

EU Support to the OHCHR

The EU annually allocates an un-earmarked voluntary contribution to the OHCHR for its targeted actions; in 2014, the amount was EUR 4 million and was in addition to support provided for the Commission of Inquiry on Syria.

The International Labour Organisation (ILO)

The International Labour Organisation (ILO), a tripartite UN agency established in 1919, plays a key role in monitoring economic and social rights. The core labour standards are embodied in its eight fundamental conventions. The EU promotes the ratification and effective implementation of these conventions through cooperation with the ILO, including participation in an ongoing discussion on labour standards and the work of the ILO supervisory bodies. At the same time, as part of the external aspects of its employment and social policy, the EU promotes the principles of decent work – including respect for the ILO's fundamental conventions – in relations with partner countries, by means of bilateral and regional policy dialogues and the implementation of development assistance projects (see section 15, "Ensuring the promotion of human rights in the external dimension of employment and social policy", for more details).

Enhanced regional mechanisms for human rights

Democratic governance and human rights are at the heart of the EU's partnership with the African continent under the Joint Africa-EU Strategy (JAES). At the 4th Africa-EU Summit that took place in April 2014 in Brussels, the Heads of State or Government of both continents and the Presidents of the African Union (AU) and European Commission reiterated their commitment to the principles of good governance, democracy and the rule of law. They also agreed to work together to ensure the full respect of human rights, international law and gender equality, and to fight impunity and all forms of discrimination, racism and xenophobia. The 11th AU-EU Human Rights Dialogue was scheduled for February 2015 in Addis Ababa.

Cooperation on human rights with the League of Arab States (LAS) was initiated on the basis of the EU-LAS Cairo Declaration of 13 November 2012. The joint work programme adopted on the same date focuses on dialogue, the exchange of know-how on the implementation of international human rights standards, the development of LAS human rights mechanisms, and the mainstreaming of human rights in LAS activities. A Memorandum of Understanding on concrete cooperation activities in the field of human rights for the period 2013-2015 was formally agreed at the November 2013 senior officials' meeting and a number of its elements are already being implemented. In April 2014, the EU and the LAS organised a workshop with civil society on coexistence and non-discrimination in multi-faith and multi-ethnic societies, and combatting and criminalising incitement to hatred in line with international standards. A number of human rights-related cooperation activities were also held in the framework of the EU-CoE joint programme to strengthen the political and democratic reform processes in the EU Southern Neighbourhood partner countries.

In its dialogues with Latin American countries, the EU reiterated its support for the Inter-American Human Rights System and its independent and integral character.

The EU has been working with Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) human rights bodies/committees on promoting exchanges of expertise, best practices on specific human rights treaties and the UPR process, the implementation of international human rights treaties, specific thematic priorities, the role of regional human rights mechanisms, and the provision of institution-strengthening and capacity building through technical assistance, including through the ASEAN-EU Human Rights Programme (which includes human rights cooperation activities under the Regional EU-ASEAN Dialogue Instrument (READI) Facility for the year 2014-2015). The EU Special Representative for Human Rights was invited to make a return visit to Indonesia where he addressed the ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission for Human Rights (AICHR)/ASEAN regional conference on the right to life and moratorium on the death penalty, to mark the EU's strong and principled opposition to the death penalty before the topic was debated at the UNGA 69th session, and to vigorously encourage countries of the region to move forward on this issue. During the visit, the EUSR emphasised the importance of working together to strengthen the universal application of human rights and of strengthening cooperation with civil society. In Brussels, the EU Special Representative for Human Rights hosted the first delegation of the Independent Permanent Human Rights Commission (IPHRC) of the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation. At the initiative of the EEAS, the delegation conducted an exploratory visit to EU institutions and also to the Council of Europe's monitoring mechanisms. Concrete cooperation on the ratification of international human rights instruments continued with the Pacific Island Forum Secretariat through a project financed by the EIDHR.

Finally, at the 16th annual EU-NGO forum in Brussels in December (see section 2), strong encouragement was given and useful exchanges of experience took place on the implementation of universal human rights standards by regional mechanisms. The role of regional mechanisms in the promotion and protection of freedom of opinion and expression online and offline was discussed, with specific attention devoted to linking and reinforcing the tools and mechanisms to counter the worsening environment for human rights defenders and the trend towards restrictive NGO laws and practices in an increasing number of countries. The forum saw the participation of representatives from a number of regional human rights mechanisms, including the UN, OHCHR, OSCE and the Council of Europe.

The Council of Europe

The EU pursued its close cooperation with the Council of Europe (CoE) in 2014. In line with the 2007 Memorandum of Understanding, both organisations maintained regular contacts at both political and working levels, with cooperation on human rights, the rule of law and democratisation issues being at the heart of their relationship. Cooperation was guided by the EU priorities for Cooperation with the Council of Europe 2014-2015, adopted by the Council of the European Union on 19 September 2013.

The Commission President, the HR/VP, and Commissioners held meetings with senior Council of Europe officials, including the Secretary General and the President of the CoE Parliamentary Assembly (PACE). Cooperation was enhanced not least through the regular direct contacts between the EUSR for Human Rights and the CoE Commissioner for Human Rights.

The EU closely followed the work of the CoE expert bodies in monitoring and advising CoE Member States on human rights standards. The EU also uses the CoE reports as input to the human rights dialogues. The EU held its annual consultations on its enlargement package with the Council of Europe. In November 2014, the EU held consultations with the CoE and its monitoring bodies during the preparation of the annual European Neighbourhood Policy progress reports, with a constructive exchange of views and experience.

In order to foster the protection of fundamental rights within the EU, the Lisbon Treaty mandated the EU to accede to the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR). On 18 December 2014, the Court of Justice of the EU (CJEU) delivered its opinion on the draft agreement on the accession of the EU to the ECHR (Opinion 2/13). The Court identified problems with regard to its compatibility with EU law and declared the draft accession agreement not compatible with Article 6(2) TEU and with Protocol No 8 relating to Article 6(2) TEU. The Commission is currently carrying out an in-depth assessment of the opinion, which requires re-negotiating the draft Accession Agreement on a series of points.

The Commission continued to finance joint programmes and activities with the Council of Europe in the fields of the rule of law, democracy and human rights, amounting to more than EUR 100 million a year.

In October 2014, the Council of Europe organised a high-level conference on the European Social Charter in Turin where the Commission was invited to discuss on synergies between EU law and the Social Charter. It was agreed that dialogue would continue to address specific divergences. Possible future divergences should be prevented.

In December 2014, the Council of Europe organised a follow-up workshop to the Turin Conference. The panel highlighted that the economic crisis revealed possible cleavages between EU law and policy and the European Social Charter. There was a need for strong synergies and a possible approach would be for the EU to join the European Social Charter. Different interpretations of the European Court of Justice and the European Committee of Social Rights because of dissimilar weighing-up of economic and social rights were viewed as problematic. A suggested solution would be a standing advisory committee and the adoption of an early warning system by the EU, which would indicate pre-emptively possible conflicts with the European Social Charter.

The Commission continued to make a major contribution to CoE activities by financing joint programmes and activities. The Commission and CoE continued to implement a large number of joint programmes within the fields of the rule of law, democracy and human rights, with a financing volume of over EUR 100 million a year. The Council of Europe Eastern Partnership Facility, which was launched in 2011, achieved positive results on justice reform, elections, cybercrime and anti-corruption, and the programme has been extended. In 2012, the Commission launched the EU-CoE programme for strengthening democratic reform in the Southern Mediterranean (EUR 4.8 million over 30 months), which promotes progress on human rights, the rule of law and democratisation in the Southern Mediterranean countries, in the spirit of the EU's revamped European Neighbourhood Policy. Although the focus of the programme remained on Tunisia and Morocco, increased contacts and cooperation with other partners in the region were recorded in 2013 and these continued in 2014, in particular with Jordan, Egypt and Algeria.

The OSCE

The EU remained a major supporter of and strong contributor to the work of the OSCE in 2014. The EU continued to actively support the OSCE's efforts to address security challenges in the OSCE region through all three of its dimensions: politico-military, economic and environmental, and human.

Responding to the crisis in and around Ukraine dominated the agenda of the OSCE in 2014. The EU strongly supported the steps taken by the OSCE to address the crisis, particularly the establishment of a Special Monitoring Mission, as well as the deployment of a Human Rights Assessment Mission and election observation missions for both the presidential and parliamentary elections.

The EU continued to advocate a stronger OSCE response to broader human rights challenges in the OSCE region. In 2014 the Swiss OSCE Chair placed a particular focus on strengthening the engagement of civil society in the OSCE, protecting human rights defenders, preventing torture, and promoting gender equality. The EU contributed to various OSCE conferences on these issues, for example with the EU Special Representative for Human Rights as keynote speaker at the OSCE conference on human rights defenders held in Bern in June. The EU co-sponsored side events in the margins of related OSCE conferences in 2014 on enforced disappearances and on the link between torture and the death penalty.

Despite strong EU support, decisions on preventing torture and strengthening civil society engagement in the OSCE failed to find consensus at the Basel Ministerial Council, mainly because a few OSCE participating States opposed any reaffirmation of existing commitments or strengthening of the OSCE's work in this area. A modest decision on preventing and combating violence against women was adopted by the Ministerial Council. OSCE participating States agreed to increase the OSCE's work on promoting gender equality by developing an addendum to the OSCE Action Plan on promoting gender equality in 2015. The EU was active in efforts to mainstream gender equality across all aspects of the OSCE's work. The European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights presented its survey on violence against women in the EU to the OSCE Human Dimension Committee in April, and work was ongoing on preparing an OSCE project that would replicate this survey in other parts of the OSCE region.

The EU continued to use the OSCE's weekly Permanent Councils and the monthly OSCE Human Dimension Committees to review the human rights commitments of the 57 OSCE participating States and to trigger debates about their implementation. In these fora the EU highlighted its concerns with regard to human rights and fundamental freedoms – such as freedom of expression including the safety of journalists, freedom of assembly and association, and the death penalty – as well as with regard to tolerance and non-discrimination, including LGBTI rights.

The annual Human Dimension Implementation Meeting took place in Warsaw between 22 September and 3 October. The EU actively participated in this meeting, including by organising side events on freedom of peaceful assembly and freedom of expression. During the side event on freedom of expression, the EU presented the newly adopted EU Guidelines on Freedom of Expression Online and Offline. Follow-up discussions on the implementation of the guidelines were held with civil society in the margins of the meeting. Both side events informed the drafting of two OSCE decisions on freedom of expression and freedom of peaceful assembly and association which were tabled by the EU at the OSCE Ministerial Council and co-sponsored by a further 15 states. In general, the EU maintained a close interaction with OSCE institutions and other executive structures, in particular on election issues with the ODIHR, and with the Representative on Freedom of the Media, as well as with the High Commissioner on National Minorities and the OSCE secretariat.

VIII European Parliament contribution to the 2014 EU Annual Report on Human Rights and Democracy in the World

The European Parliament remains committed to the advancement of human rights and democratic principles. During 2014, the rule of law, democratic principles and breaches of human rights were debated regularly in Parliament's plenary part-sessions, targeted in various parliamentary resolutions, and raised in meetings of the committees and inter-parliamentary delegations. Human rights also form an integral part of the work of the President of the European Parliament, who addresses specific cases of human rights violations in public statements as well as in the course of his high-level meetings. Meetings with human rights defenders and non-governmental civil society organisations are also regularly included during his official visits abroad.

Parliament's scrutiny of EU human rights policy

At the level of the committees of the European Parliament, issues relating to human rights in the world are specifically dealt with by the Committee on Foreign Affairs' Subcommittee on Human Rights (DROI). Following the European Parliament elections in May 2014, the Subcommittee was constituted on the basis of revised parliamentary Rules of Procedure, which attributed to it an additional task concerning "coherence between all the Union's external policies and its human rights policy". The Subcommittee organises hearings and has clear responsibilities regarding parliamentary reports on human rights issues. It accordingly contributes to Parliament's reports and resolutions, thus exercising its duty to provide parliamentary oversight on EU human rights policy and contributing to the international debate on related subjects.

DROI maintains close working relations with the EEAS, other EU institutions and with human rights NGOs, as well as multilateral human rights institutions. Through *in camera* briefings and debriefings, the Subcommittee on Human Rights has continued to follow the human rights dialogues and consultations conducted by the EEAS with third countries. The practice of regular Contact Group meetings between DROI and high-level EEAS officials continued in 2014 and included discussions on the review and re-launch of the EU Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy. As 2014 was an election year, only one parliamentary report prepared in DROI was adopted in a plenary session, namely the report on the eradication of torture in the world. Work on Parliament's Annual Report on Human Rights and Democracy in the World also began in 2014. Over the course of the year DROI hearings, often arranged jointly or in association with other relevant committees or inter-parliamentary delegations, welcomed several UN Special Rapporteurs on human rights, and other representatives of UN human rights bodies as well as prominent human rights defenders. DROI has also established a solid working relationship with the first EUSR for Human Rights, including through the holding of regular public exchanges of views on the EU's human rights policy.

EU policy on the eradication of torture

In its resolution on the eradication of torture in the world, the European Parliament observed that the implementation of the EU guidelines on torture remains insufficient and at odds with EU statements and commitments to addressing torture as a matter of priority. It urged the EEAS and the Member States to give renewed impetus to the implementation of those guidelines, notably through more ambitious and specific actions to eradicate torture, such as more efficient information-sharing and burden-sharing, training and joint initiatives with UN field offices and the relevant UN Special Rapporteurs and other international actors such as the OSCE and the Council of Europe. The resolution put forward a number of proposals applicable to the European Parliament itself, calling for the adoption of a practical guide for parliamentarians on visiting places of detention as part of regular visits to third countries by Parliament delegations, and recommending that such visits be undertaken in consultation with the EU Delegation and the relevant civil society organisations in the country concerned.

European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights Worldwide

The regulation on the new EIDHR, covering the years 2014-2020 and adopted by Parliament and Council acting as co-legislators, entered into force in spring 2014. The parliamentary political steering role regarding the first EIDHR Strategy Paper, as well as all other External Financing Instruments (EFIs) falling under the competence of the Committee on Foreign Affairs (AFET) was taken up in a high level Strategic Dialogue between AFET and the relevant Commissioners (Development and Enlargement). Two such meetings took place in spring 2014 and covered all the EFIs.

The Strategic Dialogue with Commissioner Piebalgs providing input to the EIDHR Strategy Paper took place in March 2014. In preparation for this, as well as in follow-up, Parliament presented a number of questions, comments, and recommendations to the Commission and the EEAS. At the end of this process, the EIDHR Strategy paper was adopted in October 2014.

The annual activities funded under the EIDHR are described in more detail in the Annual Action Programmes (AAPs) – one covering election observation activities, prepared by the European Commission's Service for Foreign Policy Instruments, and the other covering the remaining EIDHR activities, prepared by DG DEVCO. Each year the draft implementing measures for these AAPs normally reach Parliament two weeks before the meeting of the Council's Democracy and Human Rights Committee, and Parliament is given the opportunity to present its comments and recommendations on the specific EIDHR activities.

In autumn 2014 the Committee on Foreign Affairs established a new Working Group on External Financing Instruments (WG EFIs) tasked with the scrutiny of the programming and implementation of the five EFIs that fall under the competence of AFET, including the EIDHR. Due to its specialised role, DROI will continue to be the forum where the more specific technical discussions related to the EIDHR will take place *in camera*. EIDHR implementation concerning election observation missions will continue to be dealt with, as in the previous legislature, by Parliament's Democracy Support and Election Coordination Group (DEG).

Children and armed conflict

The EU's policy concerning vulnerable children in armed conflict situations was another focus issue for DROI in 2014. In December, the UN Special Representative of the Secretary General for Children Associated with Armed Conflicts and the UNICEF Deputy Director participated in a hearing on 'Children Not Soldiers - How to better protect children in armed conflicts'. The main objective of the hearing was to rally further European Parliament support for the campaign "Children, not Soldiers", launched by UNICEF in March 2014 in Afghanistan, DRC, Chad, Myanmar, South Sudan, Somalia, Sudan and Yemen to prevent and end the recruitment and use of children by national security forces in conflict by the end of 2016. DROI also organised a hearing on the situation of children in the armed conflict in Gaza, in which Professor Nurit Peled-Elhanan, the 2001 Sakharov Prize Laureate, participated. DROI also commissioned an external study on child soldiers and the EU policy response.

In its resolution on the 25th anniversary of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, the European Parliament condemned the use of children for military and terrorist activities or purposes, and recalled the importance of providing psychological support and assistance for all children who have been exposed to violent events or are victims of war. Moreover, Parliament called on the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy / Vice-President of the Commission (VP/HR) to prioritise and mainstream children's rights in all the EU's external action, including in the context of Human Rights Dialogues, trade agreements, the accession process and the European Neighbourhood Policy, and in relations with the African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) Group of States, in particular countries in conflict.

Business and human rights

The EU approach to issues related to business and human rights continued to be a recurrent topic for DROI in 2014. In March, DROI held an exchange of views with the Permanent Representative of Ecuador to the United Nations in Geneva on the Ecuador-South Africa initiative for an internationally binding treaty in this field. This engagement continued after the May parliamentary elections, when DROI decided that business and human rights would be one of its areas of focus for the first part of the new legislature. A hearing was arranged in September 2014, focusing specifically on workers' rights outside the EU. This was followed in November by an informal meeting with John Ruggie, former Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General on human rights and transnational corporations and other business enterprises. Individual Members of the European Parliament also attended the United Nations Annual Forum on Business and Human Rights in December 2014.

Concerning a related topic, DROI held an exchange of views on the study commissioned by DROI addressing the human rights impact of land grabbing. The study and the exchange of views focused on the adverse human rights consequences related to large-scale land deals, mainly in the sphere of plantation agriculture, in low and middle-income countries.

International human rights and humanitarian law concerns over the use of drones

Following earlier DROI work on the human rights and international humanitarian law aspects of the use of drones, in March 2014 the European Parliament adopted a resolution on the use of armed drones. This expressed Parliament's grave concern over the use of armed drones outside the international legal framework, and urged the EU to develop an appropriate policy response at both European and global level which upholds human rights and international humanitarian law. Moreover, Parliament called on the HR/VP, the Member States and the Council to oppose and ban the practice of extrajudicial targeted killings. The resolution also encouraged follow-up on the recommendations of the UN Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions and the UN Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms while countering terrorism.

Mainstreaming human rights in the parliamentary committees

Apart from the work done within the Subcommittee on Human Rights, the European Parliament also seeks to achieve mainstreaming of human rights in its overall work, in accordance with the relevant Articles in the EU's fundamental treaties, which define universal human rights and democracy as the founding values of the Union and as the core principles and objectives of the Union's external action. In line with Parliament's resolutions on human rights, mainstreaming includes the challenge of internal/external coherence in human rights policy, as well as ensuring that human rights compliance is reflected in, for example, priority policy areas as trade, migration and interactions with strategic partners.

Human rights issues are debated in the Committee on Foreign Affairs (AFET) in its parliamentary reports on EU foreign policy or on different types of international agreements which include human rights clauses. Commercial and trade agreements including human rights clauses are dealt with by the Committee on International Trade (INTA). The Committees on Development (DEVE), and on Women's Rights and Gender Equality Committee (FEMM) also deal regularly with human rights aspects of the EU's external relations in their respective spheres of competence, and have regularly drafted formal opinions to support the preparation of human rights-related parliamentary reports in the Subcommittee on Human Rights. Moreover, FEMM concluded work as the lead committee on two important reports on women with disabilities, and on sexual and reproductive health and rights. The Chairs of the Committees on Foreign Affairs and on Development co-chair the Democracy Support and Election Coordination Group (DEG) that has expanded its mandate beyond election observation to also cover follow-up to elections and democracy support activities in general. The Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs (LIBE) is the key actor on fundamental rights within the European Union, and it has major responsibilities concerning external aspects of the EU's internal policies, for example in the areas of migration and asylum policy. Constitutional and legal questions are dealt with by the Committee on Constitutional Affairs (AFCO) and the Committee on Legal Affairs (JURI), which consider, among other areas, EU accession to the European Convention on Human Rights, which will also have implications for and an impact on the EU's external relations.

Human Rights mainstreaming in the Committee on Foreign Affairs

The AFET places human rights and democracy promotion as cross-cutting issues high on its agenda in the course of all its activities, including its reports, exchanges of views with guests to the Committee, or in bilateral meetings. When visiting third countries, AFET always makes a point of meeting with civil society organisations and international organisations in the field and raising human rights issues, and in some cases Members decide to focus a visit specifically on human rights issues. The Conclusions of the Rome Inter-parliamentary Conference (November 2014) on CFSP held with EU National Parliaments, has a specific section on human rights. The final remarks underline the commitment made by the new HR/VP "to work closely with the European Parliament and national parliaments to ensure that EU Foreign Policy is focussed on delivering security, democracy, human rights, stability and the hope of a prosperous future for the citizens of Europe". Human rights are mainstreamed within the reports and resolutions prepared by AFET. The annual report on CFSP stresses the importance of the protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms and adherence to common values. In the annual resolutions on the enlargement countries (in 2014 these were adopted between January and March) Members focused on, among other areas, the promotion of democracy (political culture, independence of democratic institutions including parliaments, judiciary etc.) and the protection/reinforcement of human rights (freedom of expression, anti-discrimination, the rights of vulnerable groups including women, children, Roma, LGBTI, rights of persons belonging to minorities). In these enlargement resolutions Parliament took up the cases of, among others, the imprisoned Macedonian journalist Tomislav Kezarovski, who spoke up against the brutal attack on LGBTI participants at the Merlinka Film Festival in Sarajevo, or expressed itself in defence of the Pride marches in Budva and Podgorica.

Furthermore, Members often raise particular issues that are of common concern to the EU as a whole, such as the ratification of the Rome Statute of the ICC (in the case of the own initiative-report on the future of EU-ASEAN relations, adopted in January 2014, or on the moratorium and possible future abolition of capital punishment as set out in Parliament's recommendation on the negotiations for an EU-Japan Strategic Partnership Agreement, adopted in April 2014). AFET also contributed to the parliamentary work on the Inquiry on Electronic Mass Surveillance of EU Citizens by appointing two rapporteurs to follow the activities related to the inquiry carried out by LIBE.

As part of its enhanced role in monitoring the negotiations, and the implementation, of EU agreements with third countries, AFET has always insisted on the human rights dimension, for example, in the case of the Enhanced Partnership and Cooperation Agreement with Kazakhstan, AFET asked for a major human rights monitoring mechanism; while in the case of the 2014 Framework Agreement with the Republic of Korea, AFET and then the plenary, gave consent to the conclusion of the Framework Agreement, where important provisions relate to the promotion of human rights and shared values.

The different Working Groups of the Committee often focused on human rights and democracy issues. The Working Group on the Middle East, which ended its mandate in 2014 and was replaced by the newly constituted Working Group on the Southern Neighbourhood, held meetings on a monthly basis and focussed on human rights in the context of the peace process and on ways to promote the economic and social inclusion of all components of Palestinian society in the occupied Palestinian Territories. The Working Group on the Western Balkans, reconfirmed in the new legislature, held regular exchanges of views on the state of democracy and human rights in the region, for instance in discussion with young academics from a number of the countries in question on subjects covering judicial independence, gender issues, parliamentary oversight, and the role of civil society. The newly established Working Group for External Financing Instruments was created to look at, among other areas, the mainstreaming of human rights in the five instruments under the scrutiny of AFET: Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA), European Neighbourhood Instrument (ENI), Instrument for Stability and Peace (ISP), and Partnership Instrument (PI), and, most importantly with respect to human rights and democracy, the EIDHR).

The Chair of the Committee on Foreign Affairs has raised human rights concerns during his bilateral meetings, and frequently specific cases, too. Moreover, individual Members have been involved in facilitating political dialogue between government and opposition – including mediation in late 2014 in the talks between the Albanian ruling parties and the opposition, which resulted in a consensual (Albanian) parliamentary resolution ending the opposition's six-month boycott of parliamentary work.

Integrating human rights into EU trade policy

Human Rights also formed an important part of many of the debates on trade issues in the Committee on International Trade, both with regard to autonomous trade instruments and to several international trade agreements. Since the entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty, the European Parliament also co-decides on trade legislation thereby giving it important leverage to tackle human rights concerns.

In 2014 Parliament reached a compromise with Council on the Dual Use Regulation. The EU controls the export, transit and brokering of dual use items – goods, software and technologies used for civilian purposes but which may have military applications. In this compromise Parliament ensured that a statement was included on the importance of addressing surveillance technologies that can be used for human rights abuses.

At the end of 2014, Parliament started the legislative process dealing with the Commission proposal of March 2014 aimed at setting up a Union due diligence system of responsible importers of tin, tantalum, tungsten and gold originating from conflict affected and high risk areas, known as the 'conflict minerals' proposal. This piece of legislation aims to break the nexus between conflict and human rights violations on the one hand and illegal exploitation of minerals on the other as well as to promote legal trade and human development. It therefore acts potentially as a powerful tool to ensure that minerals coming from conflict zones cannot be imported into the EU.

Following the adoption of the new Generalised System of Preferences (GSP) Regulation, Parliament has been actively following the implementation of the Regulation. Through the Generalised System of Preferences, developing countries pay lower duties on some or all of what they sell to the EU, the aim being to contribute to the growth of their economies. The GSP+ scheme gives further benefits to countries which show credible commitment to implementing 27 important conventions in the fields of labour, human, environmental and good governance rights and rules. At the start of 2014 ten countries obtained the GSP+ beneficiary status following Parliament's scrutiny and after having committed themselves to improving respect for the 27 afore-mentioned conventions. Since then Guatemala, Panama and El Salvador (February 2014) and the Philippines have also obtained GSP+ status, after strict and intense scrutiny by Parliament. INTA is actively involved in monitoring their respect for these conventions as well as in the dialogue between the GSP+ beneficiaries and the Commission.

INTA monitors on-going trade negotiations through its monitoring groups which have been established for all the main on-going negotiations. The sustainable development chapter is part of that monitoring process. In 2014 INTA co-organised a hearing with the Employment Committee to discuss the labour dimension of the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP) negotiations, and INTA members have raised the issue of a sustainable development chapter with the EU TTIP negotiators on a number of occasions. INTA also actively monitors the on-going negotiations for the Economic Partnership Agreements. Human rights are an essential element of these agreements and the European Parliament has been scrutinising negotiations to ensure that clauses providing for some form of human rights linkage be included in every single agreement.

Since the entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty the EU is also exclusively competent for investment agreements. The EU negotiates these with Asian states, such as Singapore, China and Myanmar. INTA is keeping a close eye on these agreements, including the human rights dimensions. INTA organised a hearing on the negotiations towards an EU Myanmar Investment Agreement to hear what the various stakeholders had to say, and INTA will closely monitor developments with regard to respect for the Corporate Social Responsibility commitments of European companies, before recommending that consent be granted on a possible investment agreement.

INTA and DROI also held a debate with the author of an externally commissioned study on 'Human Rights Clauses in Trade and Investment Agreement after the Lisbon Treaty: Implications for the European Parliament', who in his recommendations focused inter alia on the scope of the key clauses, on the monitoring of human right violations, and on their enforcement and implementation mechanisms.

Eradication of child and forced labour remained an important issue for Parliament. Already back in 2011 Parliament had decided to withhold its consent to the EU-Uzbekistan textile protocol of the EU-Uzbekistan Partnership and Cooperation Agreement, insisting on an ILO monitoring mission to the country following on from reports of the use of forced and child labour during the cotton harvest. In 2013 Parliament kept up the pressure, and the Uzbek Government finally agreed to receive such a mission during its autumn harvest. In various resolutions, including one on sustainability in the global cotton value chain, Parliament also continued to push for a legislative proposal on an effective traceability mechanism for goods produced through child or forced labour. In response, the Commission adopted the Staff Working Document on Trade and Worst Forms of Child Labour.

INTA also increased its efforts to monitor the implementation of trade agreements and their sustainable development chapters. In March 2014 an INTA delegation visited Peru and Colombia to assess the state of implementation of the multi-party trade agreement concluded between the EU, Peru and Colombia, to which the European Parliament had given its consent in December 2012. Before doing so Parliament had obtained a commitment from Peru and Colombia that they would implement the trade and sustainable development chapter, both governments presenting a roadmap detailing how this would be done. During their visit, the INTA Members observed that while the purely trade provisions seemed to have been implemented correctly, further progress on the commitments undertaken by the Peruvian and Colombian Governments in terms of labour rights and social dialogue was needed. It was evident that the Commission has not yet developed a proper mechanism to monitor the implementation of the Trade and Sustainable Development in the agreement.

Human rights and development

Regarding human rights and development, 2014 was marked by major policy discussions on the post-2015 global development framework. In its resolution of November 2014 on the EU and the global development framework after 2015, the European Parliament defined its position regarding the integration of human rights in development cooperation. The resolution welcomed the inclusion of the promotion of a human rights-based (HRBA) and people-centred approach among the Sustainable Development Goals proposed by the UN Open Working Group, but stressed that a more ambitious approach in this regard was essential for tackling the roots of poverty, social exclusion and inequality.

The resolution therefore called on the EU to redouble efforts aimed at ensuring that, in the upcoming inter-governmental negotiations, the human rights-based approach and the right to development become the underpinning concepts of the post-2015 global development framework, and that the key HRBA pillars of universality and indivisibility, non-discrimination and equality, accountability and rule of law, participation and inclusion are included in the design, implementation and monitoring of this post-2015 framework.

Moreover, the European Parliament stressed that national and local policies should fight corruption and impunity, ensuring access to judicial institutions that are impartial and independent and provide effective remedies for violations of human rights to all.

The Committee on Development (DEVE) also raised human rights in various policy contexts, including in its strategic dialogue with the European Commission on the programming of the development actions financed under the new financing instrument for development cooperation (DCI) and its thematic and geographic draft programmes covering many relevant human rights, democracy support and governance-related issues. DEVE also organised a public hearing on the issues related to political dialogue on human rights, which should take place under Article 8 of the Cotonou Agreement, and raised child marriage in a specific exchange of views in the spring of 2014. Children's rights were also raised in a resolution on the under-nutrition and malnutrition of children in developing countries, adopted in November 2014.

Democracy support

New strategic approach to democracy support and election observation

2014 was a year of change for the European Parliament. A new Parliament was elected for the next five year term (2014-2019) which continues the activities undertaken under the previous legislature in the field of democracy support. At the end of the 7th Legislative term, the Democracy Support and Election Coordination Group (DEG), the political body which oversees and endorses the various activities in the field of democracy support and election observation, issued an 'End-of-legislature report' setting out recommendations for the new parliamentary term .

This report proposed a more strategic approach for the European Parliament in the field of democracy support, linking the activities (including election observation, parliamentary support, human rights actions and in some cases mediation) around the electoral cycle of a given country, which will increase the coherence among the individual actions under a common strategy. This new approach was called the Comprehensive Democracy Support Approach (CDSA). Administrative changes were consequently implemented in the Secretariat of the European Parliament, resulting in the merger of the Office for Parliamentary Democracy (OPPD) with the Election Observation Unit to become the Democracy and Elections Actions Unit (DEAC), bringing a greater coherence to its work.

In 2014 the European Parliament was actively engaged in election observation activities. It sent delegations to observe elections in Egypt (presidential), Ukraine (presidential and parliamentary), Tunisia (presidential and parliamentary) and the Republic of Moldova (parliamentary). The delegations worked successfully alongside the other international organizations monitoring the elections and were fully integrated into the framework of the long-term EU Election Observation Missions or in the joint International Election Observation Missions (IEOMs) in the OSCE area. In line with the new Comprehensive Democracy Support Approach, elections are not viewed as 'one-off' events, and the EP will continue to monitor closely the implementation of the recommendations of the international missions in a broader democracy-building approach.

Parliamentary capacity building

Activities in the field of providing assistance and capacity-building for members and staff from Parliaments of third countries have been continuing throughout 2014. This was achieved through a range of activities, in particular through the organising of conferences and study visits as well as training events for members of parliaments and staff.

During 2014 several study visits were organised by the Directorate for Democracy support. These included programmes for the Jordanian House of Representatives (focusing on the reinforcement of the role of parliamentary blocs in Jordan's political system, in line with the specific recommendations of the 2013 EU EOM to Jordan), the Parliament of Armenia, the communication departments in the parliaments of the Gulf Cooperation Council, parliamentarians from Kenya and Uganda (focussing on regional integration), members of the opposition parties of the Parliament of the Republic of Moldova, members from the Permanent Committee on Finance and Monetary Affairs of the Pan-African Parliament (PAP), parliamentary staff dealing with the organisation of committee and plenary work in the National Assembly of Senegal, and officials responsible for information and communication technologies in the Parliament of Myanmar (as part of the European Parliament's programme of support for the development of the Parliament of Myanmar). Other visits of shorter duration were arranged for nine Democracy Fellows, broadly focussing on the support provided by the EP to emerging democracies and – more generally - on the role played by parliaments in underpinning a democratic system of governance.

The European Parliament Support Programme for the Parliaments of the pre-accession countries aims at supporting democracy in enlargement countries by strengthening parliamentary capacity and fostering parliamentary dialogue, in line with the European Parliament's political objectives and decisions taken by its political authorities. All these countries have a 'European perspective' and follow a European agenda. Nonetheless, the parliaments of the countries of the Western Balkans are all relatively new and have very limited operational budgets and low numbers of staff. In 2014, two conferences brought together MEPs and MPs from the region, including a major conference on fundamental rights, non-discrimination and the protection of minorities, including LGBTI, that took place in Tirana. The support programme also included a study visit to the European Parliament by members from the National Assembly of the Republic of Serbia, conducted at a high political level.

The role of delegation visits in human rights and democracy support

The European Parliament's committees as well as its standing inter-parliamentary delegations conduct official delegation visits to third countries. In 2011 Parliament's Conference of Delegation Chairs adopted specific guidelines on integrating human rights in delegation visits.

In 2013 the Subcommittee on Human Rights (DROI) organized delegations to the UN Human Rights Council in Geneva and to Kazakhstan. DROI Members also constituted a major part of the ad hoc delegation that visited Qatar in follow-up to an urgency resolution on the situation of migrant workers in the country.

DROI delegation to the UN Human Rights Council

As in previous years, a DROI delegation attended the UN HRC session in March 2014, following the adoption of a European Parliament resolution on the EU's priorities for the 25th session of the HRC. The resolution commended the UN High Commissioner on her work to strengthen the UN human rights treaty bodies, but reiterated Parliament's concern that elections to the HRC were not competitive, and expressed its opposition to the arranging of uncontested elections by regional groups. Moreover, Parliament emphasised the importance of standards for HRC membership as regards commitment and performance in the human rights field, and urged member states to insist on such standards when defining the candidates they will vote for. The resolution also regretted the fact that the space for interaction between civil society and the HRC has been shrinking and that NGOs are being offered fewer opportunities to speak at the sessions.

The DROI delegation was able to raise these concerns as well as exchange views on other related matters in meetings with key interlocutors including High Commissioner Pillay, who was reaching the end of her mandate, a number of UN Special Rapporteurs and the Head of the EU Delegation. As per the usual practice, the DROI chair addressed a meeting of the EU Heads of Mission and participated in an exchange of views with them. The delegation also met with representatives of civil society and attended segments of the High Level Dialogue on Sexual Violence in the Democratic Republic of Congo.

AFET-led ad hoc delegation to Israel and the occupied Palestinian Territories

Following a resolution on the issue, the European Parliament decided to send an ad-hoc delegation to Israel and the occupied Palestinian Territories in the spring of 2014 to discuss the issue of Palestinian prisoners in Israeli detention centres. Members discussed pre-trial detention, administrative detention and access to prisoners, as well as draft legislation then under consideration and later discarded regarding hunger strikes and force-feeding. Meetings were held with institutional counterparts as well as human rights organisations such as B'tselem and Physicians for human rights.

Ad hoc delegation to observe trials of journalists in Turkey

The last year of the legislature was also the last year of the mandate of Parliament's ad-hoc delegation for the monitoring of journalists' trials in Turkey, which focussed on fundamental freedoms such as freedom of expression and media freedom and adequate judicial safeguards for defendants in line with Council of Europe standards. The ad hoc delegation had been constituted on 1 June 2011 at the request of the Chair of the Committee on Foreign Affairs, and the Chair of the European Parliament Delegation to the EU-Turkey Joint Parliamentary Committee (JPC) with the purpose of observing the "important trials of journalists in Turkey, including those of Nedim Şener and Ahmet Şık,". It was composed of five Members and over the period covered by the activity report conducted four trial observations and held numerous meetings with prosecution and defence magistrates, lawyers, bar associations, journalists, press groups, civil society and human rights organisations, as well as with Turkish government and European Commission representatives. It also followed relevant judicial developments through the EU Delegation to Turkey, the Ministry of Justice, lawyers and other observers and all publicly available data, reports and news. The delegation's report presented factual observations gathered by the delegation and conclusions. It was submitted as a contribution to discussions in the relevant bodies of the European Parliament, and as a basis for the continuation of a constructive dialogue with the Turkish authorities.

Sport, migrant workers and the delegation visit to Qatar

In February 2014 the Subcommittee on Human Rights organised a major hearing on sport and human rights focussing on the situation of migrant workers in Qatar. The hearing was linked to an urgency resolution adopted at the November 2013 plenary session on the situation of migrant workers and a proposal by the Conference of Presidents of the European Parliament that an ad hoc delegation composed of AFET and DROI Members be sent to Qatar,. This hearing took place in March 2014, as a joint undertaking with the European Parliament's standing Delegation for relations with the Arab Peninsula (DARP). High-level representatives from the sport's governing body FIFA, the International Labour Organisation, the International Trade Union Confederation and other stakeholders took part in this hearing which enabled the European Parliament to engage in a critical and constructive fashion with the key interlocutors, and to hold the EU Institutions to account regarding the EU's approach to the situation in Qatar as well as to other major sporting events.

The delegation visit to Qatar allowed Parliament to follow-up on these concerns. The delegation was also encouraged by the announcement by the Qatari authorities of an upcoming significant reform, while stressing the importance of effective implementation of the existing legislation aimed at protecting migrant workers, as well as the need to establish a credible timetable for the planned reforms. The delegation expressed particular concern about the detention of children, and of individuals detained solely because they have fled their employers, and called on the Qatari authorities to follow up on the UN recommendation to replace the practice of detention with appropriate shelters designed to protect the people concerned. The delegation supported the recommendation by the UN Special Rapporteur for Qatar to ratify the ILO Conventions 87 and 98 on freedom of association, the right to organize and collective bargaining, as well as the ILO Convention 189 on domestic workers.

Human rights in the work of inter-parliamentary Delegations

The European Parliament also engages with parliaments worldwide through its standing delegations dedicated to inter-parliamentary co-operation with third countries and by participating in joint parliamentary assemblies. Human rights issues are often an integral part of missions to third countries: programmes tend to include meetings with the respective national human rights commissions and with NGOs and civil society organisations active on human rights. Human rights issues are also on the agenda at official meetings of the standing delegation taking place in Brussels and Strasbourg. The standing delegations have also taken up issues related to elections, although their work in this area needs to be distinguished from the role of the official election observation missions conducted by Parliament.

The inter-parliamentary delegations often work together with the Subcommittee on Human Rights on human rights and democracy-related topics. This was the case regarding the meeting of the Delegation to Russia dedicated to the situation of NGOs and human rights defender organisations in Russia, organized in association with DROI, in December 2014

Human rights and democracy also featured significantly in the programmes of Parliament's delegations to the Enlargement countries. The European Parliament delegation to the EU-Turkey Joint Parliamentary Committee (JPC) continued to closely monitor developments related to the democratisation process, freedom of the media and of expression and reforms of the judiciary in Turkey, and discussed these issues with their counterparts in the Grand National Assembly of Turkey during the 74th and 75th JPC meetings. It was thus able to follow-up on the work of the ad hoc delegation for the Observation trials of journalists in Turkey, which concluded its activities in April 2014. The EP Delegation to the EU-former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia Joint Parliamentary Committee also raised issues relating to freedom of expression and of media in the country during the 12th JPC meeting, which took place in November 2014 in Strasbourg.

Inter-parliamentary meetings can also serve as an opportunity to contribute to or follow up on Parliament's resolutions and reports. The European component of the EU-Mexico Joint Parliamentary Committee has been following closely the disappearance of 43 teaching students in Iguala, Mexico, which was also addressed in Parliament's urgency resolution in October 2014. MEPs held discussions to follow up on the progress made by the Mexican Government in the investigation of the crimes committed and to bring to justice the perpetrators of these crimes. The MEPs also addressed human rights aspects related to the review of the EU-Mexico Association Agreement. The Parliamentary Delegation for Mercosur contributed to the parliamentary discussion on Venezuela before a resolution was adopted in December 2014 on the persecution of the democratic opposition in the country in connection with the violent events that followed the demonstrations in San Cristobal and Caracas.

Following several resolutions on the deterioration of the situation in Syria and Iraq during 2014, the Delegation for Relations with Iraq met a delegation from Iraqi Kurdistan's Regional Parliament in November 2014. The main objective was to obtain a guarantee that basic human rights and humanitarian assistance would be granted to a growing number of refugees in Iraqi Kurdistan. One of the most important chapters of the fifth Inter-parliamentary meeting EP-Iraqi Council of Representatives, held in December 2014, also dealt with human rights, specifically focusing on guaranteeing respect for the human rights of refugees and Internally Displaced People (IDPs). Joint parliamentary assemblies bring together Members of the European Parliament and parliamentarians from third countries to discuss common challenges, including human rights and democracy issues. Falling under this category are the ACP-EU Joint Parliamentary Assembly, the Parliamentary Assembly of the Union for the Mediterranean, the Euro-Latin American Parliamentary Assembly and the Euronest Parliamentary Assembly.

The Political Committee of the Euronest Assembly debated human rights and democracy-related issues at its meetings in February and November 2014, in particular assessing the 2014 elections in Eastern Partnership countries against criteria of freedom, fairness, transparency and competition. The Working Group on Belarus of the Euronest Parliamentary Assembly held a meeting in April 2014, where the main opposition representatives, including the 2006 Sakharov Prize laureate Alexander Milinkevich, were invited to an exchange of views with MEPs.

Portugal made migration a top priority of its 2014-2015 Presidency of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Union for the Mediterranean (PA-UfM). This was consistent with the resolution on Libya adopted by the European Parliament in September 2014, which pointed out the record number of migrant arrivals by sea during 2014, which by September had already surpassed the previous record for an entire year. The resolution also recalled that all parties in Libya must commit to the protection of civilians at all times, and that all those detained should be treated in accordance with international human rights and humanitarian law. On the occasion of the UfM Parliaments' Second Speakers' Summit, due to take place in Lisbon in May 2015, a ten-point action plan should be adopted regarding this unprecedented upsurge in irregular migration into Europe.

Sakharov Prize for Freedom of Thought and the Sakharov Prize Network

The Sakharov Prize for Freedom of Thought honours exceptional individuals who combat intolerance, fanaticism and oppression to defend human rights and freedom of expression. It was named in honour of the Soviet physicist and political dissident Andrei Sakharov and has been awarded annually since 1988 by the European Parliament to individuals or organisations that have made an important contribution to the fight for human rights or democracy.

The 2014 Prize was awarded to Denis Mukwege, a medical doctor from DR Congo's eastern region, who specialises in treating the effects of sexual violence. The medical care he offers through the Panzi hospital he founded is complemented by psychological care and the teaching of skills so that the victims of violence in the region may have a means of earning a living after their recovery. The award of the Prize to Dr Mukwege raised a great deal of political and media interest. A full three-day programme at the European Parliament, in conjunction with the award ceremony, included meetings with the President of the European Parliament, the AFET, DEVE and DROI Committees, the ACP Delegation and the political groups. Other institutional meetings included a discussion with the new EU HR/VP. The awarding of the 2014 Prize to Dr Mukwege also reasserted Parliament's continued engagement with issues linked to violence against women, and in particular the situation of women in armed conflict situations, in follow-up to and implementation of landmark UN Security Council resolution 1325, which will have its 15th anniversary in 2015.

In 2014 Parliament's Conference of Presidents (CoP), responsible for selecting the final winner of the Sakharov Prize, also decided to invite two other shortlisted candidates, the Ukrainian NGO EuroMaidan, and a representative of imprisoned Azerbaijani human rights defender Leyla Yunus, to the November award ceremony. An ad hoc delegation to Azerbaijan to visit imprisoned finalist Leyla Yunus, as proposed by the CoP, was unable to visit in 2014. At the end of the year Ms Yunus remained in prison. Parliament has continued to follow her case closely.

In 2008, the Sakharov Prize was complemented by the launch of the Sakharov Prize Network, composed of former Laureates. A series of events was organised in 2014 with a view to increasing the visibility of the Sakharov Prize and Parliament's engagement in human rights. In 2014 Sakharov Lectures were organised in six EU Member States in cooperation with the EP's Information Offices, and in the US in cooperation with Parliament's Liaison Office in Washington. Sakharov Laureates and Members of the European Parliament participated in these public debates, in some instances co-hosted by universities and in cooperation with international organisations such as Unicef, aimed at raising awareness of human rights issues around the world. Sakharov Prize Laureates also participated in the annual EU-NGO Forum organised by the EEAS for the second year running. 2014 saw a three-day event organised by the Sakharov Prize Network in the form of the One World Film Festival, which included public film screenings and debates held in Parliament with the participation of MEPs and Sakharov Laureates, other EU stakeholders, film directors and journalists, and which had public audiences of up to 200 people.

The Sakharov Prize Network and the continuous monitoring by Parliament's services allowed for rapid responses to such situations as the suspension of Iranian Laureate Nasrin Sotoudeh's licence to practice law, and the campaign calling for the freedom of kidnapped Syrian Sakharov Prize Laureate Razan Zaitouneh. Laureates were available for EP hearings, meetings with the EEAS, and to meet EP delegations travelling to their countries, as well as in EU Delegations on the ground. For example, the Nigerian Laureate Hauwa Ibrahim briefed the EU Delegation in Abuja on the search for the girls kidnapped by Boko Haram in Chibok.

Country and Regional Issues

Country and regional issues

I Candidate countries and potential candidates

The values on which the EU is founded are enshrined in the Copenhagen criteria for membership, in particular: democracy, the rule of law, respect for fundamental rights, and the importance of a functioning market economy. The Commission has worked over the past five years to further strengthen the credibility of enlargement policy and to ensure tangible and sustainable results are achieved not only in the fundamental reform areas, including rule of law and fundamental rights, but also in the areas of public administration reform and economic governance.

The 2014-2015 Enlargement Strategy³⁹ highlights the main challenges ahead for candidate countries and potential candidates. Among other things, it stressed the need to improve the functioning and independence of the judiciary and to fight corruption and organised crime, inter alia through building up credible track records of investigations, prosecutions and final convictions in such cases. As regards fundamental rights, the Commission notes that these are largely enshrined in law but that more needs to be done to ensure they are fully respected in practice. Concerns remain over freedom of expression and of the media and further efforts are needed to protect the rights of persons belonging to minorities and to tackle discrimination and hostility towards vulnerable groups, including on grounds of sexual orientation. Additional work is also required to promote the rights of women and children, to fight domestic violence and to support persons with disabilities. It is equally important for countries to ensure effective functioning of the institutional framework for the protection of fundamental rights and to foster an enabling environment for civil society organisations as this will enhance political accountability and deepen understanding of accession-related reforms. The Commission looks forward to candidate countries soon being able to participate as observers in the work of the EU's Fundamental Rights Agency.

³⁹ http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/pdf/key_documents/2014/20141008-strategy-paper_en.pdf

Albania

Two key projects funded under the 2013 annual IPA programme of assistance have been focusing on the overall modernization of the justice system and on human rights. On the one hand, the EU Assistance Mission to the Justice System (EURALIUS IV – EUR 4 million) is providing advice and expertise to enhance the effectiveness of the judiciary with a view to concretely enforcing national and international human rights legislation and ensuring effective protection to victims of abuse. On the other hand, a twinning project (EUR 1 million) for the penitentiary system is introducing international best practices for managing high- risk and vulnerable offenders, including mentally-ill detainees.

Under the civil society facility, ten projects totalling approximately EUR 1.5 million are currently ongoing in various areas related to the protection of human rights. These projects, implemented predominantly by local civil society organizations, are aimed at (i) improving media freedom and pluralism across independent sources of information; (ii) fostering social inclusion for persons belonging to minorities, particularly Roma; (iii) monitoring respect for fundamental rights in detention centres; (iv) supporting access to justice for vulnerable groups and (v) promoting restorative justice and victim -offender mediation for juveniles.

http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/pdf/key_documents/2014/20141008-albania-progress-report_en.pdf

Bosnia and Herzegovina

In 2014, financial assistance under IPA focused on enhancement of the Social Protection and Social Inclusion systems for children (EUR 0.5 million project implemented by UNICEF), on harmonization of legislation with the UN Convention on Rights of Persons with Disabilities (EUR 1 million under IPA 2011) and on supporting the socio-economic empowerment of approximately 260 mine victims and their families through the Mine Victims support project (EUR 1 million). Socio-economic inclusion of Roma population is the focus of a EUR 2.5 million project which includes provision of 152 housing units. Similar activities and construction of a further 140 units will be financed through a new call for proposals with a budget of EUR 2.5 million. Provision of durable housing and other measures for vulnerable returnees or internally displaced persons are financed under the Annex VII Return Strategy implementation project (EUR 7 million) which is jointly managed with the UNHCR.

26 projects funded under EIDHR totalling EUR 5 million are currently ongoing. These projects focus notably on the protection of minorities, including Roma, on the promotion and protection of LGBTI persons, on the rights of children, women and disabled persons, and on the rehabilitation and re-integration of victims of torture and violence. A new call for proposals with a EUR 1 million budget was launched in November 2014.

http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/pdf/key_documents/2014/20141008-bosnia-and-herzegovina-progress-report_en.pdf

The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia

In 2014, most of the 14 contracted grant projects financed under the IPA national envelope (EUR 1.5 million) supported actions to protect human rights, in particular protection of vulnerable groups, victims of family violence and activities under the Decade for Roma inclusion. Among these were, in particular, activities to combat trafficking in human beings, including Roma children in primary school education, and to establish a gender equality council in the country. 6 projects financed under the IPA Civil Society Facility (EUR 1 million) were aimed at strengthening the civil society's active involvement in public and *acquis*-related policies.

11 grant projects financed under EIDHR (EUR 1.2 million) were implemented with the objective of supporting independent media; increasing confidence in democracy by facilitating democratic debate; strengthening the free legal aid system; supporting an integrated, inclusive and non-discriminatory educational model (Mozaik); increasing the social integration and development of children with special needs in 4 municipalities; and supporting persons with disabilities.

http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/pdf/key_documents/2014/20141008-the-former-yugoslav-republic-of-macedonia-progress-report_en.pdf

Iceland⁴⁰

Iceland continued to guarantee fundamental rights and freedoms. No IPA assistance was provided in this area.

⁴⁰ Following a decision of Iceland's government, accession negotiations have been on hold since May 2013.

Kosovo*⁴¹

Capacity building of the Ombudsman institution and civil society continued to be supported through a EUR 1 million project implemented by the Council of Europe. April 2014 saw the launch of a Twinning Project (financed under IPA 2011) aimed at fighting homophobia and transphobia through implementation of awareness raising and training targeting a varied group of stakeholders and establishment of strategic partnerships with civil society organisations for the provision of legal and psychological counselling. Provision of social services to persons and notably children with disabilities and justice for children were the focus of ongoing IPA projects (worth EUR 1.5 million and EUR 0.6 million respectively). An additional four projects (amounting to approximately EUR 3 million) focused on the protection and promotion of rights of persons belonging to minority communities. A total of 15 projects under the Civil Society Facility were ongoing or launched in 2014 with the objective of strengthening dialogue, cooperation and partnerships between government and civil society.

During 2014, eleven projects financed under EIDHR 2011 and 2012 continued to be implemented by civil society. These projects focused on the strengthening of advocacy capacities of vulnerable groups, on enhancing inter-community and inter-ethnic relations through cultural activities, and on issues related to the empowerment of women, LGBTI and disabled persons' rights. At the end of 2014, the EU Office contracted a further five projects under EIDHR 2013 (approximately EUR 1 million) aimed at, inter alia, strengthening women organisations and enhancing the political representation and participation of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities.

http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/pdf/key_documents/2014/20141008-kosovo-progress-report_en.pdf

⁴¹ *This designation is without prejudice to positions on status and is in line with UNSCR 1244/1999 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence.

Montenegro

During 2014 there were eight ongoing IPA projects in the area of human rights, concerning, inter alia, social inclusion, sustainable solutions for the internally displaced Roma population, gender issues, drug rehabilitation and support to the Ombudsman's office and Constitutional Court on the application of human rights standards. The total value of IPA projects was EUR 8.3 million over a period of four years.

In addition, in 2014 the EU provided financial support to seven projects under EIDHR (Country-Based Support Scheme) with a total value of EUR 0.9 million. These seven projects range from the social inclusion of Roma, prevention of ill-treatment in prisons through reform of rehabilitation and re-socialisation, to the rights of people with disabilities, increased trust in the electoral process and other human rights issues.

http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/pdf/key_documents/2014/20141008-montenegro-progress-report_en.pdf

Serbia

In 2014, the EU continued to implement four projects under the IPA programme to support anti-discrimination policies and to improve the situation of vulnerable people, including Roma people, refugees and internally displaced persons, with a total value of EUR 16.5 million. In the framework of the Civil Society Facility 2013 twenty-two grants were awarded to the civil society organisations with an overall value of EUR 2.4 million. Newly-funded projects will contribute to the fight against corruption by focusing on increased transparency in the public sector, on providing support to people and groups mostly exposed to discrimination and on supporting cooperation between Serbia and Kosovo through cultural, media and youth initiatives.

Under the EIDHR budget for 2013, the EU provided financial support to 18 projects in Serbia implemented by civil society organisations, with a total value of EUR 1.2 million. The main focus was on protection of minorities, and on gender equality, children's rights, rights for asylum seekers and rights of persons with disabilities.

http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/pdf/key_documents/2014/20140108-serbia-progress-report_en.pdf

Turkey

Reform and capacity -building needs under the rule of law and fundamental rights have been identified as major priorities for Turkey in the Country Strategy Paper for 2014-2020 (IPA II assistance). Under the IPA 2014 programme, action regarding judiciary is aimed at strengthening its independence, impartiality, efficiency and administration. As regards fundamental rights, the IPA 2014- related action deals with support to key institutions (parliament, the bar of lawyers, the Turkish National Human Rights Institution), as well as strengthening of the civilian oversight of internal security forces.

In addition to the IPA support, the EIDHR instrument supported 55 projects in 2014 aimed at strengthening civil society in its work on human rights, including the protection of human rights defenders; rights of LGBTI persons; women's rights (including women's political participation and preventing violence against women); refugees and asylum seekers; protection of minorities; freedom of religion; and freedom of expression and cultural rights.

http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/pdf/key_documents/2014/20141008-turkey-progress-report_en.pdf

Multi-beneficiary assistance

Under multi-beneficiary assistance, projects under IPA 2011 and 2012 continued to be implemented. These deal with the protection of minorities (EUR 3 million) and they provided targeted support to Roma communities (EUR 3 million). The implementation of a new regional programme on inclusive education started at the beginning of the year (EUR 4.6 million). Civil society organisations were funded with a total of EUR 7.2 million under a multi-annual envelope to support and protect women's rights, Roma people, persons with disabilities and LGBTI persons and to promote gender mainstreaming and gender equality.

II EEA/EFTA countries

Norway

As the EU and Norway share similar human rights standards, the EU focuses primarily on cooperation and the and maintenance of a close dialogue with Norway on human rights matters in international organisations (UN, Council of Europe, OSCE etc.) and in specific countries across the world. In Norway, human rights are included in the EU's public diplomacy and information activities, to stress the EU's leading role worldwide.

In September 2014 the Human Rights Council adopted the outcomes of the Universal Periodic Review of Norway. In the discussion, delegations noted the unwavering commitment of Norway to promoting and protecting human rights on the international scene and said that the report reflected Norway's willingness to consider ways to further promote and protect human rights nationally, especially in order to eliminate discrimination on all grounds.

Switzerland

The EU cooperates and maintains a close dialogue with Switzerland on human rights matters in international organisations (UN, CoE, OSCE etc.) and in specific countries across the world. Human rights are included in the EU's public diplomacy in Switzerland and information activities to stress the EU's leading role worldwide.

Regarding the European Convention on Human Rights and the role of the European Court of Human Rights, there is general recognition that the Court's rulings have positively influenced the case-law of the Swiss Federal Court where human rights and the Charter of Fundamental Rights are concerned. The Swiss Federal Council, in its report on the 40 years of Swiss participation in the Convention, calls the Convention a cornerstone of the European community of values, which nevertheless may benefit from reform. However, criticisms on recent individual Court rulings were reflected by the current attempts by one important political party to codify the primacy of national over International law in the Swiss constitution.

Andorra, Liechtenstein, Monaco, San Marino

As the EU and Andorra, Liechtenstein, Monaco and San Marino share similar human rights standards, the EU coordinates primarily with them on human rights matters in international organisations (UN, Council of Europe, OSCE etc.). The EU also takes part in the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) of the human rights situation in these countries in the framework of the UN Human Rights Council.

III European Neighbourhood Policy

Armenia

The EU's objectives on human rights and democracy in the framework of its relations with Armenia are defined in the EU-Armenia Partnership and Cooperation agreement (1999) and the ENP EU-Armenia Action Plan (2006). Our cooperation is aimed at continuously improving democratic institutions and the judiciary, the promotion of human rights and rule of law, good governance, the fight against corruption and the strengthening of civil society.

The EU has a regular and active dialogue with Armenia on human rights in different fora and formats, during which all issues of concern are discussed openly. During the latest Human Rights dialogue in December 2014, the EU specifically welcomed the Human Rights Strategy Action Plan adopted by the President of the Republic of Armenia in February 2014. The plan serves as a roadmap for coordinated action by public institutions towards fulfilling Armenia's international human rights commitments and obligations. However, the EU noted that the plan should better address certain priority areas such as alignment with the UN Convention against Torture, electoral rights, and the advancement of women's rights. In June 2014 the EU also welcomed the Human Rights Action Plan in a joint statement together with the UN, OSCE and the Council of Europe, and Armenia has agreed to take its recommendations on board as the Action Plan will be continuously updated.

The Human Rights dialogue also discussed the need to enforce mechanisms for civil society to influence the policymaking process. There are indications of progress such as the establishment of a Public Council on Civil Society, a consultative body that can take its own initiatives and submit questions. The EU provided support to democratic governance in Armenia, implemented by the British Council, which targets the creation of a sustainable legal and financial framework for civil society, capacity to engage in legal reform and advocacy, and media pluralism.

To ensure that reforms are in place in good time before next elections, the EU continued to encourage Armenia to implement the recommendations of the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe's Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (OSCE/ODIHR) following the last round of elections (2012-2013), in particular regarding the legislative framework. Towards the end of the year, the Central Electoral Commission presented a package of legislative proposals. The EU emphasised the need to ensure equal opportunities and the participation of women also in political life and at higher levels of the administration. The EU provides support for women's increased participation in decision-making.

Prison conditions remain a concern, as does ill-treatment during pre-trial detention. The EU continued to support the alignment of prison conditions with CPT standards. Some limited progress was noted with the development of a Penitentiary Reform Action Plan in line with CPT's recommendations and the construction of a new prison according to CPT standards. The draft law to introduce a probation service in Armenia was discussed with stakeholders and civil society public fora.

Other concerns raised in the EU's dialogue with Armenia are: the need to ensure respect for the principle of non-discrimination and to adopt comprehensive anti-discrimination legislation protecting the rights of vulnerable groups such as persons with disabilities and of LGBTI persons; to address gender-based violence and implement the law on provision of equal rights efficiently; to finalise the draft Law on Freedom of Conscience and Religion; to continue the reform of public administration and in particular to intensify the prevention of and the fight against corruption; and to intensify the reform of the judiciary and law enforcement and to improve public trust in the judiciary system. While Armenia has been making clear efforts to address human rights issues, the main weakness remains the adoption and proper enforcement of reforms and legislation.

The EU issued a local statement following the attacks on civic activists and opposition politicians in December, and encouraged an effective and impartial investigation of events.

During 2014, the EU continued to facilitate the structural dialogue between civil society and the authorities. The EU continued regular consultations with civil society and launched a new project in 2014, which focused on reforming the legal framework and promoting sustainability through social entrepreneurship. The European Endowment for Democracy meanwhile provides support to grassroots organisations. Together with UNICEF, the EU provided support for the de-institutionalisation of children. Children remained among the poorest groups of society (36.2%) with higher risk of children with disabilities living in poverty.

The EU continued to provide substantial assistance to strengthen the independence and professionalism of the justice system in Armenia. This included budget support and a joint project with the Council of Europe. The European Neighbourhood Instrument has made available a 12 M EUR package for Budget Support in the field of Human Rights, supporting implementation of relevant legislation. Armenia benefits from the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR). The EIDHR continues to contribute to the development of democracy and respect for all human rights and fundamental freedoms through assistance for women and youth rights, rights of refugees (notably Syrian-Armenians), the rule of law, and citizen journalism.

Azerbaijan

The EU's human rights objectives are defined in the EU-Azerbaijan Partnership and Cooperation agreement (1999) and the ENP EU-Azerbaijan Action Plan (2006). These include strengthening freedom of expression and of assembly, ensuring a functioning civil society, and the application of the rule of law.

In recent years, Azerbaijan has seen a downward trend in human rights. This deterioration continued and accelerated in 2014, with an increasing number of persecutions and arrests including of prominent human rights defenders, and overall a severely shrinking space for civil society to operate. While acknowledging the geo-political context, the EU reacted strongly against these developments and has raised human rights and democracy concerns in its discussions with Azerbaijan in various formats, including during high-level and working-level visits and meetings.

The EU made several statements, with the aim in particular of supporting human rights defenders facing persecution. In statements and in direct discussion with the government, the EU raised several cases such those involving Dr Leyla Yunus and her husband Arif Yunus; the lawyer Rasul Jafarov; Hasan Huseynli; and the journalist Khadiya Ismayilova. It also expressed its concerns about amendments to legislation regarding NGOs. The challenges facing human rights and civil society in Azerbaijan were also flagged up in an EU statement at the OSCE Permanent Council in February.

On the slightly more positive side, in October 2014 the EU issued a statement welcoming an amnesty for about 80 prisoners including at least four civil society activists. On 31 December the EU also welcomed the fact that the end-of-the-year pardon included 10 civil society activists. However, it reacted against the raid on Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty's Baku office and encouraged Azerbaijan to take measures to restore the international community's faith in its commitment to freedom of expression and a free and independent media.

The EU has a regular dialogue on human rights with Azerbaijan in the framework of the Subcommittee on Justice, Freedom, Security and Human Rights and Democracy. The latest such meeting took place in February 2014, when a number of concerns were raised. A new meeting should have taken place in November 2014, but was postponed at the request of Azerbaijan. The environment for independent civil society activities has deteriorated significantly after two rounds of amendments to NGO legislation in February and November that introduced further restrictions as regards registration and funding of NGOs. In this context, the EU Delegation in Baku continued its thematic dialogue with civil society organisations. It also arranged ad hoc briefings by civil society for visiting officials, including during the visit of President Barroso in June. In its regular political dialogue with the Azerbaijani authorities, the EU Delegation actively worked on the resumption of a structured dialogue between the Azerbaijani government and civil society; the Joint Working Group on Human Rights (which had ceased activities in 2008) was re-established in October 2014 with the support of the Council of Europe.

The European Parliament adopted a resolution on the persecution of human rights defenders in Azerbaijan in September 2014 in light of the increasing number of arrests of civil society activists. With regard to financial cooperation, the Civil Society Facility (European Neighbourhood Instrument) and the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR) have provided support for the protection of human rights by contracting 14 projects for a total amount of EUR 2.9 million. However, activities could not start due to the fact that there were no implementing rules for the amended NGO legislation. Apart from the newly- contracted projects mentioned above, the EU Delegation managed twenty-one projects in the field of human rights. Furthermore, the EU continued to provide financial support to Azerbaijan through a number of programmes in the field of the protection of children, empowerment of women, and promotion of equality in Azerbaijan.

The EU also funded projects to support internally displaced persons (IDPs), one example being the establishment of “educational clubs” for women. At the clubs, members of the target communities, which include IDP communities, can gain or improve skills and knowledge, such as English language skills, computer skills, modern presentation skills/interview techniques or business skills.

Belarus

In 2014, the situation in Belarus as regards respect for human rights, the rule of law and democratic principles continued to give cause for concern. In October, following an annual review, the Council of the EU extended EU restrictive measures against Belarus until 31 October 2015, since not all political prisoners had been released, nor had released prisoners been rehabilitated, and respect for human rights, the rule of law and democratic principles had not significantly improved in Belarus.

In 2014 there continued to be no human rights dialogue, the first and so far only session having taken place in 2009. The EU consistently reiterated its commitment to the policy of critical engagement with the Belarusian government. The EU Delegation and EU Member States continued to call for the immediate release and rehabilitation of all political prisoners, for a stop to harassment of civil society representatives, opposition activists and human rights defenders. The EU continues to have concerns about the freedom of the media and took note of the assessment of the OSCE Special Representative for Media Freedom who visited Belarus during 2014. There has been sustained harassment of members of the independent media which increased towards the end of the year.

The EU presented the resolution adopted by the UN Human Rights Council on 27 June to extend the mandate of the UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Belarus for a period of one year.

A positive first step was the release of political prisoner Ales Bialiatski in June. The EU recognised this important step by the Belarusian authorities in a statement of 21 June. The EUSR for Human Rights, Stavros Lambrinidis, met with Mr. Bialiatski in Brussels on 1 July and underlined the EU's commitment to continuing its support for the release of the remaining political prisoners in Belarus and the reinstatement of their full civil and political rights.

Another positive step was the organisation by the Belarusian authorities, in association with the UN and the Council of Europe, of a conference on national human rights institutions, pledging to provide the Belarusian authorities with the necessary support for the creation of a human rights institution, as recommended in the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) in 2010. The EU endorsed and attended the conference.

The EU Delegation and EU Member States monitored the situation regarding local elections on 23 March through independent organizations on the ground.

The EU issued a statement on 16 May to express concern at the harassment, arbitrary arrest and detention of several dozens of representatives of civil society and opposition organisations in the run-up to the World Ice Hockey Championship in Belarus in May, urging the authorities to immediately stop these actions and to release all those unjustly detained, dropping all charges against them.

The EU condemned the three executions which took place during the reporting period, namely in a statement issued on 22 April on the execution of Pavel Selyun, sentenced to death in June 2013, in a statement issued on 14 May on the execution of Hryhoriy Yuzepchuk, sentenced to death in April 2013, and in a statement issued on 5 November on the execution of Aliaksandr Hrunou, sentenced to death in April 2014. In all its statements, the EU re-emphasized its opposition to capital punishment, which cannot be justified under any circumstances, and urged Belarus, the only country in Europe still imposing capital punishment, "to join a global moratorium on the death penalty as a first step towards its universal abolition."

On the ground, the EU Delegation supported and assisted victims of human rights violations in various ways. The Head of Delegation hosted a dinner for families of political prisoners and participated in a TV show on the situation and the rights of refugees. On 11 February, the EU Delegation participated in the launch of a project to promote the integration of ex-prisoners in Belarus and organised exchanges of views with human rights defenders, the EU Heads of Missions and the EU Member States Human Rights Working Group. The EU Delegation also attended trials of opposition, civil society and human rights activists, for example those of Mr Bandarenka and Mr Rubtsov.

As regards financial cooperation, the European Neighbourhood Instrument has made available 5.5 M EUR for support to civil society and independent media (Call for Proposals launched in 2014). An additional 2 M EUR were made available from the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR allocation for Belarus, for targeted human rights work. Civil society organisations continued benefiting from the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR). Under the EIDHR, a call for proposals with the aim of "Fostering Human Rights and Democracy in Belarus" (budget of EUR 565,000) resulted in the selection of several projects promoting gender equality and the rule of law.

The EU financed a 2-year project (2013-14) called "Towards Abolition of the Death Penalty in Belarus", aimed at influencing public opinion on and perceptions regarding the use of the death penalty with a view to strengthening the movement for abolition in Belarus. EU Member States' embassies supported the project by displaying anti-death penalty posters on their premises.

Georgia

The increasingly close relationship with Georgia within the Eastern Partnership led to the signing of the EU-Georgia Association Agreement on 27 June 2014. Both sides began applying the Agreement provisionally as of 1 September 2014.

The EU and Georgia discuss issues related to human rights and democracy in a number of fora, including the regular EU-Georgia Human Rights Dialogue that was held in Tbilisi in June 2014. The talks focused on key areas, related mainly to improving the rule of law, justice reform and law enforcement, elections, rights of persons belonging to minorities and anti-discrimination. The human rights situation in Abkhazia and South Ossetia, including the rights of internally displaced people (IDPs) were also discussed.

The municipal elections of June 2014 were largely judged to be in line with international standards, reflecting a competitive political landscape. However, concerns remain about campaign-related intimidation and violence. The media environment has improved, with greater pluralism among leading broadcasters. Apart from EU/UNDP support to prepare election officials, the EU supported the development of media monitoring ahead of the municipal elections, and supported NGO monitoring in minority-populated areas.

The combination of constant policy dialogue, advice and aid provided by the EU to Georgian partners led to tangible results. These include: a reduction in the rates of congestion and mortality in prisons, although the lack of accountability for abuses by law enforcement authorities persisted; a labour code in line with minimum ILO standards was adopted, although it lacks an effective mechanism for labour inspections; civil society was more involved in policy-making; judicial reform has improved prospects for more independent courts; an anti-discrimination bill was adopted in 2014 and the capacities of the Ombudsman's office have steadily increased – a key visa liberalisation requirement.

The role of the Prosecutor's Office and the investigative services that have continued to operate without adequate transparency or democratic oversight is among the problems the EU has continued to raise with Georgia. The institutional reform of the prosecutor's office was also launched in December 2014. A spokesperson for HR/VP Ashton issued two statements related to the prosecution of former Tbilisi mayor Ugulava and former President Saakashvili in July. Violations of the presumption of innocence and frequent reports of intimidation in the course of investigations were also a cause for concern. Illegal surveillance and insufficient personal data protection remained a challenge.

During the first Association Council on 17 November, many of the above issues were discussed. In particular, the EU called on Georgia to ensure adequate separation of powers, continue the justice sector reforms, and tackle the problem of politically motivated justice by strictly adhering to due process and finding effective and credible responses to cases of past abuse.

The European Parliament adopted a resolution on 17 December on the occasion of the ratification by the European Parliament of the EU-Georgia Association Agreement. The resolution highlights Georgia's significant progress in reforms and in strengthening relations with the EU. The resolution recognises the efforts by the Georgian authorities in the area of democratic reforms, including measures to tackle the reform of the judiciary, and the need to investigate properly and fully all allegations of violations of human rights; the resolution stresses, however, that all prosecutions should be transparent, proportionate and free from political motivation, and should adhere strictly to due process.

The EU provided strong financial support for reforms— including budget support, grants (inter alia, for the Public Defender's Office; EIDHR projects), and joint actions with international organisations such as the Council of Europe, the UN Development Programme and UNICEF. One significant project was the EUR 3 million ‘Human Rights in prisons’ that contributed in part to the dramatic drop in the prison mortality rate (27 deaths in 2014, in contrast to 132 in 2011.) In June, a new €1.2 million EU-funded project in support of the Constitutional Court started. The 2014 Special Measures to support Georgia and the Republic of Moldova included the approval of a EUR 10 million project entitled ‘Human Rights for All’ aimed at supporting the implementation of the National HR Action Plan, particularly with regard to the protection of minorities and anti-discrimination, privacy rights, labour rights, law enforcement oversight and other vulnerable groups. This is a top -up to the planned €50 million budget support for justice. The EU's Special Adviser on Constitutional and Legal Reform and Human Rights, Thomas Hammarberg, issued follow -up recommendations to the Georgian government at the end of his mandate in June 2014.

Republic of Moldova

The increasingly close relationship with the Republic of Moldova within the Eastern Partnership allowed for the signing of the EU- Republic of Moldova Association Agreement in June, its prompt ratification by the Republic of Moldova in July and the provisional application of some of its provisions as from 1 September 2014. The Agreement sets out a reform agenda for the Republic of Moldova based on key values such as democracy and the rule of law and respect for human rights. The European Parliament deployed an election observation mission, which was integrated in the OSCE/ODIHR mission to monitor the parliamentary elections held on 30 November. In a statement, the EU welcomed the holding of parliamentary elections in the Republic of Moldova and emphasised the preliminary findings and conclusions of the OSCE/ODIHR, stating that these elections were characterized by a wide choice of political alternatives and were generally well administered. However, the EU also stated that the de-registration of one electoral contestant shortly before Election Day raised questions about the timing and circumstances.

During 2014 the EU continued to engage in human rights discussions with the Republic of Moldova in various formats, with a special focus on issues such as judicial reform and the fight against discrimination. The annual human rights dialogue was held in Brussels in April, allowing for an open exchange on issues such as freedom of expression and the media, anti-discrimination and the rights of persons belonging to minorities, as well as on the fight against impunity and ill-treatment, including reparations to victims. In November, these discussions continued in the framework of the annual EU-Republic of Moldova Human Rights Expert Talks, with the participation of the UN, the OSCE and the Council of Europe. During the meeting the EU also encouraged the representatives from the Republic of Moldova to fully implement the current Universal Periodic Review recommendations before the country undergoes its second review in 2016.

As a follow-up to the human rights dialogue, in June the EU funded and organised in Chisinau a TAIEX (Technical Assistance and Information Exchange instrument) seminar on the de-institutionalization of children with disabilities.

Positive developments in 2014 included the formal establishment within the Ministry of Health of both an advocate (Ombudsman) for psychiatry and of an anti-discrimination Commission to review complaints about discrimination in the health sector. In April 2014, the law on the National Human Rights Institution was amended, so that it now includes transparent procedures for the appointment of the Ombudsman for Human Rights. In Chisinau in May, the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTI) community organised a Pride March for the first time without legal challenge and with effective protection provided by the police. All these developments were actively supported and ultimately praised by the EU.

During the year, the EU continued its dialogue with civil society organisations, for example by seeking their views during a preparatory meeting on 13 November prior to the annual human rights talks at expert level with the Republic of Moldova.

As regards financial cooperation, in 2014 five new projects were funded under the European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument's Civil Society Facility and the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR) dealing with anti-discrimination, the rights of vulnerable groups (elderly people, children, Roma, people with disabilities) and children's rights..

During the reporting period, the EU continued supporting the Republic of Moldova's reforms in the justice and law enforcement systems, through the implementation of the Justice Sector Reform Strategy 2011-2016 and the corresponding Action Plan, and through large-scale budget support and technical assistance operations. Despite this there continues to be delays in implementing these critical reforms, including in particular the reform of the Prosecutor General's Office. Corruption persists and limits citizens' rights to access the justice system.

Ukraine

Judicial reform, respect for fundamental freedoms, the right to free and fair elections, measures to combat arbitrary detention and torture and discrimination are the main EU policy priorities in relation to Ukraine.

However, the many challenges confronting Ukraine throughout 2014 have shifted the EU's attention in the area of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms to the violence committed against peaceful demonstrators during the EuroMaidan revolution, the situation in the illegally annexed Crimean peninsula, and the ongoing conflict in parts of the Donetsk and Lugansk regions.

The EU reacted immediately to the unprecedented violent crackdown on peaceful demonstrators of November 2013. During the protests, the EU Delegation and EU Member States stepped up their activities in the field of human rights. A flexible coordination channel was established between the EU Delegation and the staff of EU Member States' Embassies to coordinate spot-checks and share information in real time about alleged human rights violations. The main activities included monitoring of demonstrations and peaceful gatherings; observation of court hearings involving detained demonstrators, focusing in particular on cases of arbitrary detention and torture; contacts with lawyers and families of persons subject to arbitrary detention; and visits to hospitals where injured demonstrators were receiving medical treatment, as well as to hospitals and other venues where detained demonstrators were receiving treatment.

EU Member States also contributed decisively to the monitoring of the situation outside Kyiv through their consular network and through visits to Dnipropetrovsk and Cherkasy, where the crackdown on protestors was particularly violent.

Throughout the period of protests, EU leaders, including HR/VP Ashton, used all bilateral contacts with Ukrainian authorities to voice concern about respect for human rights, calling for a solution to the crisis to be found based on respect for human rights and the rule of law. These concerns were also voiced publicly through statements made during the crisis by EU leaders, as well as by representatives of EU Member States. All visits of HR/VP Ashton and Commissioner Füle included meetings with civil society, including human rights activists, as well as with injured demonstrators and policemen in hospitals.

The Head of the EU Delegation visited opposition leader Yuriy Lutsenko , who was in hospital after being beaten in a standoff with police officers, as well as civic activist Dmytro Bulatov, who was kidnapped on 23 January 2014 and subjected to extreme torture. Member States coordinated to pay periodic visits to the hospital, including at ambassadorial level, until Bulatov was allowed to leave the country and authorities desisted from initial attempts to put him under detention. EU Delegation diplomats, together with colleagues from EU Member State embassies, visited Ihor Lutsenko , a civic activist in hospital after being kidnapped and severely beaten.

On 17 April 2014, Ukraine lodged a declaration accepting the jurisdiction of the International Criminal Court for events that took place between 21 November 2013 and 22 February 2014. The EU took positive note of this declaration and continued to encourage Ukraine to conclude internal procedures allowing for the ratification of the ICC statute, as provided for in the EU-Ukraine Association Agreement, signed in June 2014 and now provisionally in force . The EU has welcomed the establishment of the International Advisory Panel of the Council of Europe which monitors the investigations by Ukrainian authorities of the violent incidents which took place between 30 November 2013 and 21 February 2014 and of the Odessa events of 2 May 2014. The illegal annexation of Crimea and Sevastopol, as well as activities of the illegal armed groups and the aggression by Russian armed forces in the Donetsk and Lugansk regions, gave rise to a number of challenges in the area of human rights. The EU reacted strongly to Russia's actions in the Crimean peninsula, condemning the illegal annexation and adopting a number of actions in support of the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine, including restrictive measures.

The EU continued to show support for the rights of the Crimean Tatar people. In its conclusions on Ukraine of 20 October 2014, the EU Council condemned the deterioration in the human rights situation on the peninsula, in particular the persecution and intimidation of the Crimean Tatars. In the context of the escalating conflict in parts of the Donetsk and Lugansk region, EU leaders have called on all stakeholders to find a sustainable political solution to the crisis on the basis of full respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine. They underlined the need for independent and transparent investigations of all human rights violations and for their perpetrators to be brought to justice. In this regard, the EU has consistently supported the work of the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission which is deployed throughout Ukraine, including in the conflict area, and the UN OHCHR Mission to Ukraine which provides monthly reporting on the human rights situation in Ukraine, including on the territories illegally annexed by Russia or under the control of illegal armed groups.

On 3 July 2014, the spokesperson of HR/VP Ashton condemned the intimidation campaign and acts of violence against journalists as a result of the activities of the illegal armed groups in Donetsk and Lugansk. On 17 July 2014, the spokesperson of HR/VP Ashton expressed concern at the kidnapping and imprisonment in Russia of Ukrainian military pilot Nadiya Savchenko.

Following the downing of the MH17 in July, the European Council called for an immediate and thorough investigation.

European Parliament Delegations sent observers to the presidential elections on 25 May 2014 and the parliamentary elections on 26 October 2014. Following the October parliamentary elections, the Commission and European Council Presidents took note of the OSCE-ODIHR's preliminary assessment describing the elections as "an important step in Ukraine's aspirations to consolidate democratic elections in line with its international commitments". In its resolutions (17 July and 17 September), the European Parliament called for, inter alia, an end to the systematic curtailment of human rights perpetrated mainly by the separatists, mercenaries and regular Russian troops and for the adoption of an anti-discrimination law in line with European standards.

The yearly EU-Ukraine Human Rights Dialogue in the framework of the Justice, Liberty and Security Subcommittee took place in Kyiv on 2 July 2014 and allowed for an open exchange on all issues affecting human rights, including the conduct of law enforcement operations in the conflict area and the right to a fair trial, the fight against arbitrary detention and torture, and the fight against discrimination, including discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity. The EU encouraged Ukraine to, inter alia, conduct thorough and effective investigations into reported human rights abuses during the Euro-Maidan protests, to adopt a legal framework governing freedom of assembly in line with international standards, to enhance media ownership transparency, and to complete the work on comprehensive anti-discrimination legislation.

The new government and president have also spoken in favour of reforming the law enforcement agencies, one aim among others being to improve human rights standards. Human rights are also factored in by the EU Advisory Mission for Civilian Security Reform in its work assisting the UA authorities to reform the Ukrainian civilian security sector.

The EU took note of the determination of the Ukrainian authorities to adopt a human rights strategy followed by a human rights action plan, as provided for by the 15 October presidential decree.

In view of the difficult human rights situation caused by the conflict in eastern Ukraine, the EU provided financial support through the Civil Society Organisations and – Local Authorities Programme (EURO 2 million to be used for actions in 2015) and the Neighbourhood Civil Society Facility (EUR 2 million out of the 2013 budget of the European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument). In addition, in response to the economic and political crisis, the EU adopted in 2014 a Special Measure for Ukraine worth EUR 365 million, of which EUR 10 million was intended for supporting civil society's role in monitoring the reform process (bilateral assistance funds). The EU coordinates its actions with the European Endowment for Democracy.

Some 20 EIDHR projects dealing with issues encompassing voting rights, free legal aid delivery reform, the fight against discrimination and measures to combat ill-treatment and torture continued to be carried out throughout Ukraine. In March 2014 a top-up of EUR 630 000 enabled 4 additional projects to be financed. These projects covered independent exit polling and media outreach during the May and October elections, monitoring of the human rights situation in the Crimea and Luhansk regions and legal assistance to victims of human rights abuses and IDPs. Through the Instrument contributing to Stability and Peace, the EU has supported the deployment of both ODIHR supplementary observers and the ENEMO international observation mission for the presidential and parliamentary elections, which have contributed to a more transparent electoral process in Ukraine.

Egypt

In 2014, the EU continued to closely monitor the human rights situation in Egypt and engaged with the authorities both before and after the election of President el- Sisi in late May, which was held in an atmosphere of deep political polarisation, partial media coverage and limited room for dissent. The EU deployed an election observation mission (EOM) to observe the Presidential election. However, due to external conditions, the EOM was not in a position to deliver its long term observation mandate in full. The conclusions of the EOM report were that "the Presidential Election was administered in line with the law, in an environment falling short of constitutional principles".

Overall, the human rights environment, in particular regarding freedom of assembly, association, expression and the media, did not improve throughout 2014. Restrictions on freedoms of association and expression were tightened in the course of the year, which was justified by the Government on security grounds. Measures included a deadline for NGOs to register by 10 November, with uncertain consequences under the old restrictive 2002 NGO law, and the amendment to the Penal Code which provided for tougher penalties on foreign funding for activities that are considered against the national interest or unity, thus prompting further self-censorship. In February, the Foreign Affairs Council conclusions deplored the 'deteriorating climate for the press' and expressed concern at the 'deteriorating human rights' situation, including the 'indiscriminate detention of political opposition and activists'.

No discernible progress was made concerning the investigations on the violent death of several hundred protestors in connection with the removal of the protest camps in Cairo in August 2013 by Egyptian security forces.

On the positive side, a progressive constitution was adopted by referendum in January, which upholds human rights and fundamental freedoms, with enhanced rights for women and gender equality. However, its implementation remains unsatisfactory, particularly with regard to human rights. Furthermore, it allows recourse to military trials for civilians.

Anti-government protests continued, rather prominently in universities, meeting with a harsh response from the state with many thousands arrested, mainly Islamists, and mostly for illegal protest and on terrorism-related charges. Trials involving activists and political detainees were often based on violations of the restrictive protest law. There have been repeated calls for its amendment.

Harsh judicial rulings were issued on some of the thousands of opponents detained, most prominently in the three mass trials that led to the sentencing to death of over 1,400 defendants in March, April and December, prompting concerns about due process. The EU issued statements calling on the 'judicial authorities to ensure the defendants' rights to a fair and timely trial based on clear charges and independent investigations and stating its opposition in principle to the death penalty, which it described as inhumane. The prosecution of opponents and dissenters often showed clear deficiencies related to due process; lengthy pre-trial detention with no formal charges was also prevalent. In June 2014 Egypt carried out executions of seven death sentences, breaking the de facto moratorium since October 2011. The EU raised its concerns with the Egyptian authorities. Furthermore, military trials of civilians continued throughout the year. On a more positive note, progress was witnessed concerning investigations into cases of targeted sexual violence against women.

While in some instances the National Council for Human Rights (NCHR) and the National Fact-Finding Committee were granted access to prisons, these remained in general closed to inspection by local or international organizations. ICRC did not obtain permission to visit Egyptian prisons. Also at the Human Rights Council in June and September and at the UNGA third committee in October, the EU expressed its concern about the deteriorating situation in Egypt, marked by indiscriminate detentions and disproportionate sentencing, and by the situation of human rights defenders and NGOs.

The review of Egypt before the Human Rights Council Universal Periodic Review Working Group took place on 5 November 2014. Among the core recommendations that states made to Egypt are : addressing restrictions on freedom of expression, media, association and assembly by revising the respective legislation, abolishing the death penalty, fighting torture and ill-treatment, investigating human rights violations committed by security forces, respecting due process rules and promoting women rights. There was widespread consensus among participating States that the new Egyptian constitution was an important step in the right direction. Egypt did not immediately accept any of the 300 recommendations, but pledged to respond to them in due course.

The EU Special Representative for Human Rights (EUSR) visited Egypt twice in 2014, once in February after the referendum on the Constitution and once in October, before Egypt's Universal Periodic Review at the Human Rights Council. During his visits, he held extensive meetings with high-level government officials, human rights-related institutions and mechanisms and civil society organizations to discuss the human rights situation and to raise EU issues of concern. During and after his visit, the EUSR explored ways to encourage and promote human rights improvements in the country, both bilaterally and in multilateral fora, and made a number of recommendations for future human rights engagement.

The EU Delegation is currently managing 38 grants (EUR 11.2 million) specifically supporting Human Rights under a variety of instruments (EIDHR, NSA-DCI, CSF-ENPI) focusing on women's rights, children's rights, migrants and refugees' rights. Other projects concern human rights advocacy, prevention of torture, media freedom , rights of persons belonging to minorities, citizen's participation and intercultural dialogue.

Israel

Overall, the EU human rights and democracy objectives in the framework of its relations with Israel focused notably on respect for the laws of armed conflict and international human rights law, including Israel's responsibilities as an occupying power, the situation of minorities and asylum seekers, children's rights and the preservation of a vibrant civil society.

The EU was particularly concerned at the resumption of military operations in Gaza over the summer of 2014 which resulted in the deaths of over 2,100 Palestinians – including more than 500 children - and 73 Israelis, as well as injuring many and causing widespread destruction of property and infrastructure. The Foreign Affairs Council, while condemning the firing of rockets into Israel by Hamas and recognizing Israel's legitimate right to defend itself against attacks, underlined that the military operation must be proportionate and in line with international humanitarian law. In particular, the EU monitored the mechanisms put together by Israel in order to ensure accountability for alleged violations of international humanitarian law committed during Operation Protective Edge in Gaza.

In addition to raising human rights issues with the Israeli authorities in day-to-day contacts, the EU continued to engage in human rights discussions in various formats, including a number of formal EU-Israel policy dialogues in the framework of the ENP during which all issues of concern were debated.

During the annual Informal Working Group on Human Rights of November 2014, the following issues were discussed: rights of persons belonging to the Arab minority (including Bedouin), children's rights, the human rights of asylum seekers, administrative detention and the condition of Palestinian prisoners in Israeli jails, and the investigation of and accountability for alleged misconduct during military and police operations.

Asylum policies more generally were also discussed in February 2014 in the Subcommittee on Migration, Health and Social Affairs, which addressed irregular migration, migrants in need of international protection, re-settlement and return and re-admission policies. The Subcommittee on Justice and Legal Matters in February 2014 addressed issues including penal policy and sentencing practices, interrogation, trials, prison conditions and juvenile justice in criminal proceedings. At the December 2014 meeting of the Sub-Committee on Political Dialogue and Co-operation addressed human rights issues in the context of Israel's responsibilities in the occupied territories .

Furthermore, the EU-Israel seminar on combating racism, xenophobia and anti-semitism took place in October 2014 and examined policies and tools aimed at combating racism and xenophobia, with a particular focus on anti-semitism.

During the year, the EU continued its dialogue with civil society organisations through regular consultations on cooperation and policy issues and training. In particular, in preparation for the dialogues most focused on human rights (informal working group and political dialogue) the delegation engaged in extensive consultation with Israeli NGOs.

Apart from the fifty days of armed conflict in Gaza, other significant developments in 2014 related to human rights, an issue on which the EU took a position and on which it continues to express its concerns, through systematic local statements and bilateral and multilateral engagement, are the increased violence and tensions across the West Bank, including in East Jerusalem over the summer and, over the autumn, a further escalation in tensions, notably in Jerusalem.

The EU continued providing financial support, mainly through its European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR) programme, in the following areas: creating a more favourable environment for CSOs and promoting human rights, advancing the rights of persons belonging to vulnerable groups or minorities within Israel, and enhancing respect for international humanitarian law and human rights in the occupied Palestinian territory. Thirty-six EIDHR projects were ongoing in 2014, and a new call for proposals was launched in November 2014. In addition, the EU Delegation in July-November carried out a comprehensive independent evaluation of the implementation of EIDHR in Israel, which highlighted the successful impact of the supported projects.

Palestine*⁴²

The EU-Palestinian Authority (PA) ENP Action Plan envisages the establishment of a Palestinian state based on the rule of law and respect for human rights within a functioning democracy and with accountable institutions.

The EU's action in Palestine is constrained by the wider political context, which deteriorated seriously in 2014 with a steep increase in tensions and violence in the West Bank and East Jerusalem and a devastating armed conflict in Gaza, which resulted in the death of over 2,100 Palestinians and 73 Israelis. Several other negative developments undermined the viability of a Palestinian State, including announcements by Israel of further settlements, expropriation of land, settler violence and demolitions. The EU expressed its grave concerns at all these developments. In April, Hamas and the PLO signed a new reconciliation agreement which led to the formation of a consensus government in June. While welcoming the unity government, the EU has emphasised that full democratic legitimacy and institutional sustainability can only be restored through genuine democratic legislative and presidential elections throughout Palestine.

⁴² *This designation shall not be construed as recognition of a State of Palestine and is without prejudice to the individual position of the Member States on this issue.

Also in April, President Abbas signed accession instruments for 20 international human rights, humanitarian and diplomatic treaties without reservation, including the seven core UN human rights treaties, the four Geneva Conventions and the 1907 Hague Convention. These instruments came into effect in the course of the following months and are applicable to both the West Bank and Gaza.

In January, Palestine approved a National Action Plan on Human Rights, developed in consultation with the UN Office of the Commissioner for Human Rights.

The EU continued to engage in human rights and democracy discussions with the Palestinian Authority in various formats, including in the Sub-Committee on Human Rights, Good Governance and the Rule of Law which took place in Brussels in November. Discussions focused on freedom of expression and assembly, conditions in Palestinian places of detention and the protection of the rights of women, as well as on reforms in the justice and security sectors and, more generally, in public administration. The EU also engaged extensively with civil society on all issues.

The EU provided support for non-partisan human rights organisations and human rights defenders, notably by ensuring a presence at selected court hearings.

The EU continued to express concerns, through systematic local statements, regarding the use of the death penalty in Gaza, including the summary execution of 25 persons over the summer. The EU has commended the *de facto* moratorium on the death penalty in the West Bank and called for a *de jure* abolition.

The EU has sought to promote its human rights objectives by giving significant financial assistance to the PA and to civil society, as well as through the work of the EUPOL COPPS mission. The EU also continued to support reforms in the areas of justice, security and the rule of law.

Jordan

Developments in the area of human rights in 2014 have to be seen in the light of increased tensions and instability in the region (in particular Syria and Iraq with the ISIL/Da'esh offensive), which are having an overall impact on the political dynamics in Jordan.

Security considerations became paramount in the leadership's decision-making and have prompted the authorities to adopt a number of laws, such as amendments to the State Security Court Law, the Anti-Terrorism Law, the Jordan Press Association Law, addressing overall legitimate security concerns but resulting in human rights challenges.

Against this background, the pace of political and governance reforms slowed down in 2014, and space for political activists, civil society and opposition has shrunk significantly, including deteriorating conditions for freedom of expression. On 21 December, the execution of eleven persons who had been sentenced to death was denounced by the EU as a clear and regrettable setback, after Jordan had applied a de facto moratorium for eight years. The government has submitted a number of new laws and legal reforms before parliament, however progress has been slow and their impact potentially limited.

The EU stressed its opposition to capital punishment in all cases and under all circumstances and called upon the Jordanian authorities to introduce a moratorium as a first step towards abolition of the death penalty.

As a positive step forward, the government decided to grant children of women married to foreigners some privileges, although these privileges are enshrined in government regulations, not permanent law.

The year 2014 was the first year following Jordan's second round of the Universal Periodic Review, (October 2013). The government undertook to follow up on the commitments made in Geneva, which, in particular in the first months of the year, led to some positive dynamics, with greater attention to human rights issues and the involvement of civil society. The government also set up a committee, under the chairmanship of the Ministry of Justice, to review the recommendations of the National Centre for Human Rights. The government followed up on this by appointing in March a Human Rights Coordinator and undertook to prepare a National Plan for Human Rights. The EU and its Member States continued to engage with the authorities as well as with civil society, including through the local Human Rights Working Group (HRWG). The HRWG agreed to prioritize in 2014 issues related to freedom of speech (including the use of the State Security Court) and women/gender, two areas emerging from the 2013 round of the Universal Periodic Review as key priorities. The EU-Jordan Association Council also stressed the importance of human rights in the context of bilateral relations and underlined the need to protect political expression and space, specifically through a new political parties and elections law enhancing freedom of expression, association and assembly. The EU also invited Jordan to continue implementing the recommendations endorsed during the UPR process.

Locally, the EU and its Member States approved joint messages on political reforms, including agreed language on key human rights issues. The EU–Jordan Progress Report includes also a number of specific recommendations, most of which were related to human rights, the rule of law and good governance in line with the recommendations of the 2013 Universal Periodic Review. The annual EU-Jordan Subcommittee on Human Rights, Governance and Democracy did not take place in 2014 for agenda reasons and was postponed to March 2015.

On 10 December, the EU Delegation organized an event on the occasion of Human Rights Day, which coincides with the 10th Anniversary of EIDHR projects in Jordan. The event included the presentation of several successful EIDHR projects in the country and the signing of four new EIDHR projects with gender equality and women's rights as priority issues, worth EUR 1.6 million. Furthermore, the EU provided support to 3 regional projects aimed at: empowering women activists in the area of transitional justice; strengthening the political and economic empowerment of women; and organising roundtables bringing together CSOs, Governments and donors.

Lebanon

The EU's human rights and democracy objectives in the framework of its relations with Lebanon are defined in the EU-Lebanon European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) Action Plan 2013-2015 formally adopted in June 2014. Human rights developments in 2014 occurred against the background of the increasingly -felt repercussions of the crisis in Syria.

Furthermore, 2014 was marked by the paralysis of Lebanese national institutions. The EU repeatedly stressed the need for Lebanon to meet its constitutional deadlines to hold both presidential and parliamentary elections. Given the institutional stalemate, many of the pressing reforms in the area of human rights, such as the criminalisation of torture and the parliamentary endorsement of the National Action Plan on Human Rights, could not be advanced

The EU continued its regular political dialogue on human rights and democracy with the Lebanese authorities: besides various bilateral meetings, three subcommittees in the ENP framework took place in October 2014. These were entitled "Human Rights, Democracy and Governance", "Social and Migration Policies" and "Justice, Freedom and Security". In October 2014, a "Summary account of the result of the proceedings concerning the inquiry in Lebanon" was released by the UN Committee against torture (CAT), in which it concluded that "torture in Lebanon is a pervasive practice that is routinely used by the armed forces and law enforcement agencies". The Committee's conclusions of the report were raised by the EU notably during the Human Rights dialogue held in Beirut in October. While disagreeing with these conclusions, the Lebanese authorities indicated that they had requested the entities concerned to investigate any such cases.

The most important human rights challenges in Lebanon in 2014 remained the prevention of torture and arbitrary detention, the alignment of prison conditions with international standards, the abolition of the death penalty (moratorium on the use in place since 2004), the promotion of equality between women and men, improvement in the living conditions of refugees, protection for migrants and other vulnerable groups and measures to tackle discrimination.

As a positive development, in April the Law protecting women and other family members from domestic violence was adopted. This law criminalises domestic violence against women, forced begging, forced prostitution, rape and murder. This was a long-term objective of the EU's advocacy.

The EU actively collaborated with civil society and human rights defenders as concerns freedom of expression and followed up with the relevant authorities on reported cases of intimidation. Human rights organisations provided input prior to the ENP subcommittee meetings in October 2014.

The EU Special Representative for Human Rights, Stavros Lambrinidis, visited Lebanon in June 2014. He also participated in the award ceremony for the EU-funded Samir Kassir Award for Freedom of the Press, which was given to three journalists (from Egypt, Tunisia and Syria).

Progress on the implementation of the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) has been stalled; preparations for a second exercise in November 2015 are underway.

Twelve projects totalling EUR 3.5 million were implemented under the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights, and support to the justice sector accounted for EUR 22 million.

Syria

Following the uprising in Syria, which began in spring 2011, and the escalation of violence and human rights violations by the Syrian Government against its citizens, the Council suspended bilateral cooperation programmes between the EU and the Syrian government and froze the draft ENP Association Agreement.

Against this background, in 2014 the EU continued to express its serious concerns regarding the continued deterioration of the humanitarian and security situation in the country. The EU condemned the atrocities and human rights violations and abuses perpetrated in Syria, particularly by the Assad regime and also by ISIL/Da'esh, Jabhat al-Nusra and other terrorist groups, as reported by the Commission of Inquiry established by the Human Rights Council. This includes indiscriminate bombings with barrel bombs, cluster ammunitions and chemical weapons by the regime forces and atrocities committed by ISIL/ Da'esh. The EU strives to ensure that all perpetrators of such violations and abuses are held accountable for their crimes which may amount to crimes against humanity and war crimes. In this regard, the EU reiterated its call to the Security Council to refer the situation in Syria to the International Criminal Court and supported the renewal of the mandate of the Commission of Inquiry at the Human Rights Council in March 2014.

Regarding presidential elections in Syria, the EU issued a statement that the election on 3 June 2014 "cannot be considered as a genuinely democratic vote".

The EU issued statements condemning the appalling human rights violations. The EU welcomed the adoption of the UN General Assembly Third Committee resolution condemning human rights violations in Syria. It underlined its concern regarding cases of forced disappearances and called for the immediate release of the victims.

The European Parliament paid close attention to the situation in Syria and the situation of Syrian refugees. It adopted several resolutions in 2014 - firstly, on the situation in Syria in February; secondly, on the situation of Syrian refugees in neighbouring countries in May; and thirdly on the situation in Iraq and Syria, and the IS offensive, including the persecution of minorities in September. It also held a plenary debate on the besieged Syrian city of Kobane / Ayn al-Arab. The EU remains deeply concerned by the regional effects of the conflict on neighbouring countries and supports their efforts to contain it, as reiterated in the Berlin Communiqué of the international Syrian refugee conference in October. The EU called for International Humanitarian Law and the protection of civilians and safety of humanitarian personnel to be respected. The European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights funds some civil society organisations working to promote human rights and strengthen the position of human rights defenders. The EU's restrictive measures, including an arms embargo, have been in place in relation to Syria since May 2011 and new measures have been introduced regularly. The EU continues its policy of imposing and enforcing sanctions targeting the regime and its supporters as long as repression continues.

Tunisia

Fundamental rights and the rule of law are a key part of the EU-Tunisia Action Plan for a *privileged partnership* agreed in April 2014.

On 26 January 2014 Tunisia adopted a modern, inclusive and democratic constitution. The new constitution introduces positive changes as regards freedom of speech, assembly, religion, women's rights (gender equality and fight against discrimination), the fight against torture and corruption, but fails to refer to key international mechanisms and implicitly maintains the death penalty. The main challenge will be to implement the legislative agenda which derives from this constitution, in particular the planned reforms of the justice and security sectors.

After the adoption of a new electoral law, parliamentary elections were held on 26 October 2014 and Presidential elections a month later on 23 November 2014. The EU Election Observation Mission (EEM) noted that these open, credible, transparent and safe parliamentary and presidential elections were well organised. Among other measures, a Superior Independent Committee for Elections (ISIE) was created and a new high independent authority on audio-visual communication thoroughly monitored media coverage throughout the campaign.

Several independent committees and mechanisms were created during 2014 in the areas of human rights, administration of justice, transitional justice, and the fight against corruption and torture. The modernization of the Tunisian judicial system has seen little progress. Since the approval of the constitution, the authorities have supported the drafting of new legislation on military justice, detention conditions, transitional justice and the fight against corruption. The EU is supporting the Council of Europe's presence in Tunisia (EUR 4.8 million) on justice, corruption, money laundering, human rights, and sharing of democratic values in the region.

Although the situation has improved, women in Tunisia continue to face discrimination as regards access to the labour market, low political representation, and low participation in public life and public office. Violence against women (including domestic violence) remains cause for great concern. In April 2014, Tunisia notified CEDAW of the lifting of reservations, and a new draft law on violence against women was finalized in October 2014.

Freedom of expression and the media is generally a reality, although it is under examination following individual cases that have caused concern, some involving prison sentences imposed on some journalists and bloggers. The EU is supporting Tunisian media through a EUR 10 million programme.

Work has also been carried out in order to draft a new law on migration that provides for the creation of an agency to fight trafficking. The EU remains engaged in the implementation of the EU-Tunisia mobility partnership signed in March 2014.

As regards cooperation, Tunisia benefits from several EU instruments (ENI), including on democracy and human rights (EIDHR with a call for proposals for EUR 1 million), and through the Civil Society Facility (EUR 1 million). Selected projects focus on elections, political debate and civic education.

Council Decision 2011/72/CFSP on restrictive measures against certain persons and entities was renewed for a further year in January 2014.

Algeria

Although the yearly Subcommittee on Political Dialogue, Security and Human Rights was postponed in 2014, human rights featured on the agenda of the EU-Algeria Association Council, the EU-Algeria Association Committee and during the negotiations on the ENP Action Plan. The EU reiterated in particular its concern regarding the 2012 Associations Law and pleaded for a normalization of the role played by Algerian civil society in public affairs.

Further to the April presidential elections, President Bouteflika was elected for a fourth five-year mandate. The EU sent a technical Electoral Experts Mission (EEM), which issued several recommendations regarding, inter alia, the urgent need to set up an independent electoral commission and measures aimed at improving transparency and traceability within the election process, mainly on voter registration and the counting process above the level of individual polling stations. According to the EEM, most of the recommendations issued in 2012 by the EU Election Observation Mission have not been implemented. Furthermore, a member of the Algerian Election Observation Commission was prosecuted for publicly denouncing electoral fraud in a report. Following the entry into force in January 2014 of the Associations Law of 2012, civil society organisations report that the legal and operational framework governing the right of association and their activities in the country has been increasingly more restrictive. Moreover, the Government has not yet adopted an implementation decree as regards international organizations operating in Algeria. Against this background, the EU Delegation has pursued its regular structured dialogue with civil society, taking place every three months.

Despite the official lifting of the state of emergency, restrictions to the right of assembly are effectively still in place in Algiers. In the run-up to the presidential elections, the government imposed further limitations on gatherings.

On media freedom, Algeria decided to open up its audio-visual sector and is working on a Council of Ethics for media professionals. Additionally, a fund to support public and private journalists has been created. Meanwhile, a journalist has been in provisional detention for more than a year awaiting trial. A court in Ghardaia decided to sentence a man to two years in prison for posting photos of policemen robbing a shop on the Internet. Cases of harassment and intimidation against journalists have been reported by local human rights defenders. The EU is financing an EUR 7.3 million programme in support of the Algerian media.

The refugee camps populated by Sahrawis in Tindouf are administered by the Polisario Front, but the responsibility to respect, protect and fulfil international human rights obligations rests on the Algerian State.

Reports of alleged retaliatory suspensions or dismissals from public service jobs in the case of strikers and protesters, as well as arbitrary arrests and prosecutions of union activists, give cause for concern. The EU and Algeria have agreed on a programme aimed at reinforcing the independence of the justice system. Likewise, Algeria participates in the EUROMED Justice III programme. The EU is also supporting the Algerian Legal and Judicial Research Centre.

Social dialogue constitutes another relevant field of action. On the occasion of the EU-Algeria Social Affairs Working Group, the EU raised the issue of trade union liberties and most particularly that concerning the International Labour Organization's recommendations to Algiers adopted in 2013.

Algeria has co-sponsored with the EU the UN moratorium on the death penalty resolution since 2007 and maintained its own moratorium ever since.

Following a law adopted in 2012, women constitute 31% of all Members of Parliament, among the highest percentage in the Arab world. There is however a need to improve the legislative framework in the area of women's rights and gender equality. Some additional steps have been taken by the government, which adopted legislation on violence against women on August 2014 and has also announced its readiness to lift a reservation regarding Article 15.4 of CEDAW.

Algeria has signed but not yet ratified the UN Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearances. In June 2014, the UN Human Rights Committee found Algeria in breach of the Covenant on Civil and Political Rights regarding the case of Mr. Lakhdar-Chaouch and the disappearance of his son.

EU bilateral assistance to Algeria in the fields of rule of law, human rights and support to civil society in 2014 amounted to approximately EUR 10 million in new allocations and was implemented through sectorial programmes (Justice) as well as through specific thematic instruments, such as the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights. The SSF for 2014-2017 indicatively provides that 15% of the bilateral envelope goes on complementary support, including in favour of civil society.

Morocco

The EU has an Association Agreement with Morocco, in a relationship classed as "advanced status" since 2008. The EU aims at supporting Morocco's democratic reform process, as outlined in the 2013-2017 Action Plan.

The EU continued to engage with Morocco on the subject of human rights and democracy during regular bilateral high-level political dialogues and visits (Commissioner Füle's visit in May 2014, Commissioner Hahn's visit and the EU-Morocco Association Council in December 2014). The EU and Morocco also hold regular specific human rights dialogues i.e., within the framework of the Human Rights, Democracy and Good Governance or Justice and Security Sub-committee meetings that took place in October 2014. The EU Special Representative for Human Rights undertook an official visit to Morocco in January 2015.

In the field of human rights and democratic reforms, important steps have been taken by Morocco since the adoption of the new 2011 constitution. By the end of 2014, 8 out of 19 organic laws needed to implement the Constitution have been adopted. The EU is committed to guiding Morocco in this regard. The implementation of the democratic reforms contained in the 2011 constitution represent the key challenges facing Morocco when it comes to consolidating human rights and democracy. The EU supports human rights in Morocco through a EUR 2.9 million project entitled "Protecting and Promoting Human Rights in Morocco" which aims at reinforcing the capacity of the National Council of Human Rights to effectively exercise its statutory competences.

The first draft of the new Press Code was made public in October 2014. The major reforms include the abolition of prison sentences for journalistic offences, guaranteeing rights such as access to information and confidentiality of sources, and banning the prohibition of articles without judicial approval. The implementation of this new law represents a key challenge for freedom of expression. Demonstrations are generally conducted in a peaceful atmosphere that allows participants to openly express a number of socio-economic and political claims. Nevertheless, concerns remain regarding freedom of assembly and association; some associations continue to face bureaucratic obstacles during registration procedures. In 2014, several NGOs have seen their public meetings cancelled by a simple administrative decision, not a judicial decision as provided by law. The EU supports Moroccan civil society through 7 EIDHR (European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights) projects through a new capacity- building programme financed by the Civil Society Facility, which aims to promote an active dialogue with Moroccan civil society. Progress on women rights is slow. The EU finances a Budget Support Programme (EUR 45 million) to support the PGE (government's policy for gender equality). The EU is looking forward to the establishment of the APALD ("*Autorité pour la parité et la lutte contre toutes les formes de discriminations*") and the creation of a new law to combat violence against women.

The death penalty is still in place but no executions have been carried out since 1993. There is currently a moratorium on executions. The possibility of acceding to the Second Optional Protocol to the ICCPR on the abolition of the death penalty is increasingly discussed in Parliament.

The justice system continues to suffer from insufficient resources and allegations of corruption. An EU programme to promote the reform of the justice sector and the implementation of the National Charter for the Reform of Justice (EUR 70 million) was prepared in 2014. Reports on poor prison conditions and the existence of torture are a cause of concern, although there are signs of clear political willingness to improve the situation, examples being the deposition of the instruments of ratification of the OPCAT in November 2014 or the national plan for prisons reform, which the EU is planning to support through a programme to be agreed in 2015.

In 2014, the EU adopted the 2014-2017 Single Support Framework for Morocco. 25% of the funds available under the Framework will be allocated to support for democratic governance, the rule of law and mobility. A new budget support programme to accompany the national education strategy (92 M€) was signed in December 2014.

Western Sahara

Western Sahara is a territory contested by Morocco and the Polisario Front. It is considered a non-self-governing territory by the United Nations. The MINURSO mandate (UN peacekeeping mission) in Western Sahara has been extended until April 2015. In 2014, the EU repeatedly expressed concerns about the long duration of the Western Sahara conflict and the implications for security, respect for human rights and cooperation in the region.

The EU has addressed this issue in meetings of the joint bodies established under the EU-Morocco Association Agreement. The EU has also consistently expressed support for the work of the UN and UNSC Resolutions 2099 (2013) and 2152 (2014), which lay particular emphasis on the importance of improving the human rights situation in Western Sahara and the Tindouf camps and welcomed the strengthening of the National Council on Human Rights Commissions, operating in Dakhla and Laayoune.

In 2013 the EU signed a bilateral cooperation assistance programme entitled ‘Protecting and Promoting Human Rights in Morocco’. This programme, under implementation, aims notably at strengthening the institutional capacity of the National Council on Human Rights (CNDH) and its regional commissions, and also those operating in Dakhla and Laayoune. The CNDH will be reinforced in terms of professional skills and its capacity to monitor the human rights situation.

Libya

While some progress was made in the first half of 2014 - two general elections were held - the Libyan transition was finally derailed by the political polarisation and the intensification of fighting between rival factions in and around Benghazi since May and which later erupted in Tripoli in July. Since September 2014 Libya has de facto two parliaments and two governments.

The EU has repeatedly warned that arbitrary detentions, torture and forced displacement constitute serious violations of international law, and that unlawful killings and politically motivated assassinations may amount to crimes against humanity. The EU welcomed the adoption of UNSCR 2174 on 27 August under which asset freezing and travel ban measures will apply to listed individuals or entities that violate international human rights and humanitarian law or which commit human rights abuses.

The HR/VP has been vocal in her condemnation of the numerous crimes, including the assassination of the well-known activist Salwa Bugaighis in Benghazi on 25 June or the assassination of at least ten activists, journalists and security personnel in Benghazi on 19 September in what has been called Benghazi’s "Black Friday". The HR/VP issued several statements throughout the year to express regret at new tragedies in the Mediterranean involving migrants who left Libyan territory for Europe.

The EU has repeatedly expressed its concern about reports on the allegiance pledged to ISIS by the Islamic Youth Shura Council in Derna (November). NGOs have documented beheadings of three Derna residents and dozens of seemingly politically motivated assassinations of public officials, judges and members of the security forces. The EU believes that the groups terrorising the population in Derna have placed themselves outside the political spectrum and are not eligible to participate in the UN-led talks. In this regard, the EU welcomed the listing by the UNSC of Ansar al Sharia Derna and Benghazi as terrorist organisations under UNSCR 1267 and trusts that the listing will increase the means to deal with these organisations and will hamper their financial flows and abilities to operate.

Through its cooperation portfolio the EU supported the High National Electoral Commission in preparing the elections for the Constitutional Drafting Assembly (February) and those for the House of Representatives (June). The EU continued implementing a variety of programmes addressing human rights and rule of law. The EU also implemented programmes for the protection of vulnerable groups (detainees, torture victims, people with disabilities and internally displaced persons). Programmes dealing with reconciliation processes also contributed to fostering human rights in this period.

IV Russia and Central Asia

Russia

In 2014, the EU continued to call on Russia to fully abide by its international human rights obligations in the United Nations, the Council of Europe and the OSCE. Calling for Russia to respect international law gained particular relevance in light of its involvement in the illegal annexation of Crimea and the destabilization of Ukraine. Furthermore, the conflict in Ukraine exacerbated the domestic human rights situation in Russia, notably through further restrictions on freedom of expression, including media and internet freedom.

In that context, the role of civil society and respect for human rights remained an element at the core of the bilateral relationship. The EU-Russia Summit which took place in Brussels on 28 January 2014, together with a number of senior official meetings, allowed the European Union to make its growing concerns clear to the Russian authorities. The EU continued to seek common ground on human rights issues of concern with Russia in international human rights fora, notably in the Council of Europe, the OSCE and the United Nations General Assembly and Human Rights Council.

The regular bilateral human rights consultations did not take place at all during the year, for the first time since the joint decision was taken in 2004 to initiate them. To compensate for the lack of direct talks with Russia on human rights, in September 2014 the EU delivered a demarche on issues of concern and handed over a list of individual cases. Contacts were stepped up, in Moscow and in Brussels, with Russian civil society organisations. The EU Delegation in Russia and the Member States continued their practice of trial monitoring and of visits to human rights NGOs across the country. The European Union also participated in the General Assembly of the EU-Russia civil society forum held in Tallinn in November 2014.

The growing restrictions on the enjoyment of the fundamental freedoms of expression, assembly and association were an essential element of the EU's concerns with regard to Russia in 2014.

Independent media outlets were subject to administrative and judicial harassment, whereas State propaganda conveyed through television led to a marginalization of dissenting voices, which were portrayed as enemies of the State or as a “fifth column”. This has instigated increased persecution by State authorities, as well as acts of violence against independent journalists and media workers, which are not always satisfactorily prosecuted by the authorities. This is also exemplified by restrictions on activities of foreign media outlets in Russia by introducing limits to foreign ownership. The European Union relayed systematically those concerns to international fora, in particular in the OSCE Permanent Council, which provided a weekly platform for frequent exchange on those issues, and in the Council of Europe.

The implementation of the new provisions of the NGO law, allowing the justice ministry to label as “foreign agents” -without the need for a court case- NGOs receiving foreign funding and engaged in vaguely defined political activities was another significant development. These provisions continued to impact on the work of many NGOs and threatened their existence. The EU reacted promptly to the labelling of the Union of the Committees of Soldiers' Mothers of Russia as a "foreign agent" as well as to the attempts to liquidate the civil rights society "Memorial" , which brings together all Memorial groups across Russia, including the Memorial Human Rights Centre, the 2009 Sakharov Prize laureate..In the context of the organisation of the Sochi Olympic Games in February the EU noted that the sentencing of environmental activist Evgeni Vitishko to a long prison sentence for "damaging a fence" was disproportionate, seemingly aimed at preventing him from presenting his report on the environmental impact of the Olympic Games.

The 2013 federal law “For the Purpose of Protecting Children from Information Advocating for a Denial of Traditional Family Values” limiting LGBT communities in freely enjoying the fundamental freedoms of expression, assembly and association remains a matter of great concern. Acts of violence against LGBTI people are not sufficiently prevented, investigated or punished by State authorities, as a result of which impunity often prevails.

The EU expressed concerns about the further sentencing of Bolotnaya square protestors to fixed prison terms in February for their participation in an opposition gathering in May 2012 and the decision to put Alexei Navalny under house arrest and to prohibit him from running in elections for 5 years. The European Union also voiced its concern about the use of psychiatric internment, notably in the cases of Mikhail Kosenko and Nadiya Savchenko, and it called on Russia to abide in such instances by the relevant guidelines of Council of Europe Committee for the Protection of Torture. The EU also called for the immediate release of Estonian police officer Eston Kohver who was abducted by Russian security services and illegally detained in Russia.

The deteriorating human rights situation in the illegally annexed Republic of Crimea led the European Union to call on Russia to uphold the rights and fundamental freedoms of persons belonging to religious and ethnic minorities living there, notably the Crimean Tatars. Abduction and persecution of several Crimean Tatar activists illustrates the deterioration of the current human rights situation in Crimea. The European Union also raised the cases of individuals abducted by Russia in Crimea who were charged with very serious offences potentially carrying heavy sentences, notably Ukrainian film director Sentsov.

The European Parliament continued to pay attention to the human rights situation in Russia. It adopted a resolution on the case of Bolotnaya protestors in March and a resolution on the threat of closure of the Memorial Society in October. In April it also adopted a recommendation to the Council on establishing common visa restrictions for Russian officials involved in the Sergei Magnitsky case.

Against the background of those developments, the EU continued to give financial support to Russian civil society and the EU-Russia civil society forum, in particular through the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights (€3 million) and the Civil Society and Local Authorities programme (€1million). An EU roadmap for engagement with civil society was adopted by EU Heads of Mission.

Kazakhstan

The EU's human rights priorities in Kazakhstan included freedom of expression, freedom of association, conditions in detention, the right to a fair trial, women's rights and freedom of religion or belief. Kazakhstan demonstrated a readiness for reform in some areas, such as torture prevention and women's rights, but the situation with regard to civil and political rights has seen a number of setbacks. During the year, the EU sought to promote respect for freedom of expression and freedom of religion or belief, to support civil society development and freedom of association and to encourage reform in the rule- of- law sector.

Throughout 2014, the EU raised human rights issues consistently and at all levels of its political dialogue with Kazakhstan. The annual EU-Kazakhstan Human Rights Dialogue was held in Brussels in November, during which the EU welcomed several positive developments, such as Kazakhstan's engagement in the second cycle of the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) and the work of the newly-established National Preventive Mechanism (NPM) against torture. However, the EU expressed concern at several developments, including, some provisions of New Criminal Codes expected to come into force in January 2015 which could impact negatively on several fundamental freedoms. Throughout the year, the EU encouraged Kazakhstan, both formally and informally, to fulfil its international obligations and develop and implement a new National Action Plan for human rights.

In the context of negotiations on the new Enhanced Partnership and Cooperation Agreement (EPCA) between the EU and Kazakhstan, senior EU officials visited the country in September and held discussions on the human rights situation with civil society representatives. During a visit in March, a delegation of the European Parliament's Subcommittee on Human Rights met with representatives of state institutions, international and civil organisations and opposition activists. The EU continued to urge the Kazakh authorities to re-examine a number of individual cases of imprisoned human rights defenders, including that of Ms. Roza Tuletayeva, a labour activist who was granted parole on appeal and released in November 2014. In another positive development, in April 2014 the EU Delegation to Kazakhstan was invited to participate as an observer in the Consultative Advisory Body on Human Dimension, the main forum for dialogue on democracy and human rights issues between the government and civil society representatives.

Throughout the year, the EU actively promoted human rights through a number of projects funded under the EIDHR. These projects addressed a range of issues, including the development of an independent and professional media, capacity-building for civil society organisations, human rights education, the elimination of torture and ill-treatment, violence against children in closed institutions, judicial and legal reform, access to justice for vulnerable groups and as well as the abolition of the death penalty. The annual allocation for Kazakhstan was EUR 900,000.

The Kyrgyz Republic

The EU human rights objectives for the Kyrgyz Republic were: contributing to establishing an independent and impartial judiciary; eradicating torture; improving the legal and policy framework for persons belonging to minorities; and the effective implementation of a zero-tolerance policy towards corruption. During 2014, the EU continued to address the issues of human rights and democracy in all political dialogue formats, including the Cooperation Committee on 19 February and the Cooperation Council on 18 November. The annual Human Rights Dialogue was held on 8 April in Bishkek. Discussions focused on judicial reform, anti-corruption policies, good governance, the prevention of torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment, women's rights and the rights of persons belonging to minority groups, including in relation to accountability for the June 2010 violence. The EU welcomed the establishment of the Constitutional Chamber of the Supreme Court, the Coordination Council on Human Rights and the National Preventive Mechanism against Torture, and the introduction of stricter penal sanctions for bride kidnapping. The EU expressed serious concerns at continued reports of the use of torture and ill-treatment against detainees, and stressed its readiness to support the authorities in their efforts to prevent torture. The prevention of torture was also the topic of the 5th EU-Kyrgyzstan Civil Society Seminar, held on 29-30 October in Osh.

During the Human Rights Dialogue and in a number of other of other meetings with the Kyrgyz authorities, the EU expressed concern regarding draft legislation criminalising "the formation of a positive attitude towards non-traditional forms of sexual relations" and draft legislation that would classify NGOs that receive foreign funding as "foreign agents". If adopted, both draft laws would fundamentally threaten human rights, freedom of expression, freedom of association, and freedom of assembly, which are among the major democratic gains and modern constitutional guarantees in the country. The EU also underlined that legitimate security concerns regarding extremist religious groups should not lead to restrictions of the rights of citizens to peacefully practise their religion or belief.

The EU strongly encouraged the Kyrgyz Republic's authorities to re-examine the case of Mr. Azimjon Askarov, an imprisoned human rights defender.

Promotion of human rights has been underpinned by the implementation of projects financed by the EIDHR, including projects on strengthening the fight against impunity for torture; securing the rights of internal migrants; and promoting inclusive education for children with disabilities.

Under the Instrument contributing to Stability and Peace, the EU supported the Constitutional Chamber of the Supreme Court in improving the quality and efficiency of constitutional justice.

Other projects focused on the role of women and on engaging young people in creative groups.

Human rights aspects were also addressed in the Rule of Law and Support to Local Communities programmes financed under the Development Cooperation Instrument.

Tajikistan

In 2014, the EU priorities for Tajikistan were to promote free and fair elections, defend freedom of expression online and offline, promote social equality, reduce the spread of radicalism among young people, protect the rights of labour migrants and facilitate the further development of civil society. The human rights situation in Tajikistan remained worrying, and there were negative developments during the year in the area of freedom of expression on the internet and freedom of association. The EU continued to engage in human rights and democracy discussions with Tajikistan in various formats, including the Cooperation Council (20 October) and the Cooperation Committee (18 June).

The annual Human Rights Dialogue with Tajikistan was held on 17 June in Dushanbe and the issues on the agenda included: torture and conditions in detention, refugee rights, freedom of religion or belief, freedom of expression, elections, women's rights and children's rights. The EU welcomed some positive steps taken by Tajikistan since the last meeting in 2013, including the establishment of an advisory council to the Human Rights Commissioner, the creation of a detention monitoring group that includes representatives of NGOs and the Ombudsman's Office, and the ratification of the Optional Protocol to CEDAW Convention. The EU recalled the importance of implementing legislation and of strengthening the role of human rights institutions. The EU focused in particular on shortcomings in the 2013 presidential elections, in line with OSCE/ODIHR recommendations, and on reports of the alleged mistreatment of detainees, despite positive developments as regards legislation against torture. The EU expressed concerns regarding developments in press freedom, including the blocking of websites.

In addition, an EU- Tajikistan civil society seminar on media freedom on 18-19 November brought together more than 60 journalists, media professionals, European experts, government officials and representatives of the international community. The two-day event covered a wide agenda, with topics such as an assessment of the overall media situation in the country; access to information; information security; responsible journalism and professional ethics; the concept of defamation and its application in Tajikistan and the country's transition to a digital switch-over. The recommendations of the CSO seminar will feed into the next EU human rights dialogue with Tajikistan in 2015.

The EU was active on a number of individual cases, including the case of Mr. Alexander Sodiqov, a student at the University of Toronto, who was detained in June while carrying out research in Tajikistan. EU Heads of Mission issued a statement in response to Mr. Sodiqov's initial detention, and the EU welcomed his release in July, and his subsequent departure from the country.

The EU implemented a number of EIDHR-funded projects aimed at promoting prevention from torture, protecting the human rights of Tajik migrant workers and members of their families, enhancing social-economic and cultural rights of prisoners and ex-prisoners in Tajikistan, and ensuring a rapid response to the emergency and immediate legal needs of refugees and asylum seekers.

Turkmenistan

The EU's human rights priorities in Turkmenistan were the improvement of detention conditions, the prevention of torture, judicial reform, freedom of expression and freedom of association, the status of human rights defenders and women's rights.

The EU continued to highlight its serious concerns about the human rights situation in Turkmenistan in meetings with the government, including during the annual Human Rights Dialogue that was held on 15th September 2014 in Brussels. At that meeting, the EU and Turkmenistan held open discussions on some of the grave human rights issues in the country, including reported cases of torture and enforced disappearances, poor prison conditions, and major limitations on the freedoms of expression, association and religion or belief. The EU welcomed the latest presidential decrees granting pardons to a large number of convicted persons (more than 1,000 prisoners in one year) and encouraged the release of individuals held in prisons for political reasons. In November 2014, the authorities agreed to allow the EU representative and a number of MS ambassadors to visit the prison for women in Dashoguz. But they have yet to take action on the offer and the visit has not yet taken place.

During the year, the EU again called on Turkmenistan to take further steps towards the effective implementation of judicial reforms, to ensure respect for the rule of law, and to ease restrictions on civil and political rights. The EU welcomed the registration of a third political party in Turkmenistan and the process of constitutional reform initiated to enhance democratic reforms and to create an Ombudsman, but recalled the urgent need to adopt a National Action Plan on Human Rights. In December 2014, the EU organised a seminar in Ashgabat on constitutional reform and the role of Ombudsman institutions, under the auspices of the EU-funded Central Asia Rule of Law Initiative.

The EU continued its dialogue with civil society associations in Turkmenistan, and held consultations with exiled human rights activists and international human rights NGOs working on Turkmenistan. Issues discussed included the new law on NGOs that was adopted in May 2014, which includes some positive elements, but also sets significant barriers to the establishment and functioning of independent civil society organisations in the country.

Uzbekistan

The EU human rights objectives for Uzbekistan include the prevention of torture, children's rights, promoting respect for the rule of law, supporting civil society development and promoting freedom of expression. The EU's priority has been to encourage and support the government of Uzbekistan in addressing some of the very serious human rights challenges in the country, including in relation to the treatment of detainees and restrictions on civil and political rights, and in respecting its international obligations.

The EU continued to engage in human rights and democracy discussions with Uzbekistan in various settings, including the Cooperation Council (17 March) and the Cooperation Committee (17 December). The annual Human Rights Dialogue, held on 18 November in Brussels, saw open discussions on a range of issues, including labour rights, freedom of association, freedom of expression, freedom of religion or belief, conditions in detention, the prevention of torture and ill-treatment and women's rights.

In its regular political dialogue with the Uzbek authorities, the EU welcomed the progress made on the elimination of the use of child labour during the cotton harvest. The EU encouraged Uzbekistan to continue and to broaden cooperation with the ILO on labour market reforms and the implementation of ILO conventions. The EU underlined that Uzbekistan's cooperation with the ILO shows the value of engagement with the international community in addressing human rights concerns, and suggested that Uzbekistan consider taking a similar approach on other human rights issues. The EU strongly encouraged the Uzbek authorities to consider issuing invitations to UN special procedures.

The EU welcomed the formal adoption in November of a National Action Plan for the implementation of the recommendations accepted by Uzbekistan under its latest Universal Periodic Review at the Human Rights Council in 2013. However, the memorandum of Understanding between Uzbekistan and the UN development programme, which would facilitate the delivery of the National Action Plan, is yet to be agreed.

While the plan had not yet been forwarded to the EU by the end of the year, the Uzbek authorities have stated that it provides for the establishment of an independent national preventive mechanism for monitoring places of detention.

The EU welcomed the deployment of an OSCE ODIHR limited election observation mission for the December 2014 parliamentary elections, and encouraged Uzbekistan to implement outstanding ODIHR recommendations meeting international standards on elections.

During the year, the EU continued its dialogue with civil society organisations in Tashkent and Brussels, and with exiled Uzbek activists.

The European Parliament adopted a resolution in October 2014 which focused on the human rights situation, the reported ill-treatment of political prisoners and poor detention conditions. A delegation of MEPs visited Tashkent ahead of the December legislative elections.

As regards financial cooperation, the EU continued providing financial support to Uzbekistan through the Criminal Justice Reform programme and another project aimed at aiding reform of the Uzbek parliamentary system.

V Africa

African Union (AU) – Joint Africa-EU Strategy

Democratic governance and human rights are at the heart of our partnership with the African continent under the Joint Africa-EU Strategy (JAES). At the 4th Africa-EU Summit that took place in April 2014 in Brussels, the Heads of State or Government of both continents and the Presidents of the African Union Commission and the European Commission reiterated their commitment to the principles of good governance, democracy and the rule of law. They also agreed to work together to ensure full respect for human rights, international law and gender equality, and to fight impunity and all forms of discrimination, racism and xenophobia.

In 2014 the EU continued to support the mandate of the African Union and the African Governance Architecture to monitor the effective implementation of the African Human Rights Strategy and African human rights instruments by all AU member states, including the African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance. Furthermore, the EU provided EUR 1.8 million of core funding to the Pan-African Parliament, the African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights (AfCHPR), including for the establishment of a legal aid fund, and to the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR).

In 2014 the EU approved important cooperation programmes to strengthen human rights on the continent. Under the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR), a EUR 1.5 million programme will support the work of the ACHPR and in particular its Special Rapporteurs on Human Rights Defenders, on Freedom of Expression and on Rights of Women. There is also an ongoing EUR 1.2 million programme to enhance the protection and the work of human rights defenders at pan-African level.

In addition, under the new Pan-African Programme, the EU approved a EUR 6.5 million project to strengthen the African Union Commission's capacity to observe elections across the continent over the next three years. This complements the EUR 0.8 million of support already provided to the African Union for the deployment of AU election observation missions in Africa in 2014.

Cooperation and dialogue with the African Union on specific human rights topics were also further strengthened in 2014. For instance, in September 2014, a joint EU-AU seminar to promote the implementation of the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights in the two regions was organised through the EU JAES Support Mechanism, an event that had been agreed at the last EU-AU Human Rights Dialogue in 2013. The EIDHR also financed the organisation of an AU-International Criminal Court (ICC) seminar in July 2014 in Addis Ababa, as well as the first Continental Conference on the Death Penalty held the same month in Benin.

In September 2014, a joint EU-African Union (AU) seminar was held in Addis Ababa on business and human rights and corporate social responsibility. The EEAS, European Commission and several EU Member States exchanged views, expertise and their experience in implementation actions which facilitate responsible business conduct. All parties pledged to promote and implement the UNGPs in their respective regions and to work on areas of potential cooperation. The EU agreed to provide technical and financial support to the development of an AU framework on promoting responsible business conduct in Africa.

Angola

In 2014 the EU continued to engage in human rights and democracy discussions with Angola and carefully monitored the political and human rights situation in the country. The main EU objective is to support Angola in developing a strong civil society. The EU also pays close attention to the implementation of laws on freedom of expression, including an independent media, and freedom of assembly, as well as to arbitrary detentions and excessive use of force. As a general objective the EU is also assisting Angola in reducing the disparities between the richest and the poorest, since economic and social rights continue to be a challenge in Angola.

Human rights were discussed during the first EU-Angola Joint Way Forward (JWF) ministerial meeting that took place in Brussels on 17 October 2014. The EU raised concerns about the law on defamation that is restricting investigative journalism and about the situation regarding freedom of expression and association. The EU welcomed the enactment of the Law on the Participation of Women in Political Life while underscoring that more work needs to be done on women's rights. Both parties agreed to engage in discussions in the framework of the political dialogue under Article 8 of the Cotonou Agreement at least once a year.

The EU also continued to be supportive of Angola's 2014 United Nations Universal Periodic Review (UPR), which made recommendations on freedom of expression, freedom of association, violence against women and children, and judicial institutions. Angola was also invited to align its national legislation with the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (ICC) in order to ratify it as soon as possible.

As regards financial support, through the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights the EU is funding several projects on the media and training of journalists. In addition, support is being given to non-state actors under the PAANE II programme. In 2014 the EU also provided funding to UNICEF for a project aimed at improving Angola's birth registration system and access to justice for adolescents in the country.

Benin

A weak judicial system, harsh prison conditions and violence and discrimination against women and girls constitute some of the main human rights challenges in Benin and are therefore at the core of the EU's priorities in the country.

The situation with regard to children's rights in Benin remains deeply worrying, as underlined by the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography, Najat Maalla M'jid, who reported to the UN Human Rights Council in 2014 on this matter. This issue remains a core priority for the EU in Benin, and it continues to take action to protect child victims of violence and sexual abuse.

Through regular contacts and political dialogue, the EU has a channel to discuss issues relating to human rights and justice reforms with the government. The latest official political dialogue session was held with the President of Benin in December 2014. The EU also holds a regular dialogue with civil society, including with human rights NGOs.

As regards financial cooperation, the EU is supporting improvements to the legislative process and access to justice by providing EUR 4.5 million to support justice sector reform, including reinforcement of the capacities of the judicial chain and modernisation of codes and laws.

The government and the constitutional institutions have demonstrated their commitment to justice reform. In September 2014 a new EUR 8 million programme was agreed to carry out such reform. In order to improve prison conditions, the EU is currently supporting a justice project (PARJ), as well as the establishment of a prison service emergency plan, which encouraged the government to build and open new prisons in 2014 using its own resources.

The EU is also providing financial support to projects aimed at ending discrimination against women and promoting women's rights in Benin. In addition, as stated above, there are numerous EU initiatives to protect children's rights and combat child trafficking. Through the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights, the EU is supporting the improvement of two youth detention, training and reintegration centres. Finally, the EU is also taking action to promote the rights of disabled persons in Benin.

Botswana

The EU objectives on human rights and democracy in the framework of its relations with Botswana focus on the issues of capital punishment and the rights of persons belonging to minorities, such as the indigenous San-group as well as of LGBTI persons.

The EU engages in human rights and democracy discussions with the government of Botswana, in particular through the annual political dialogue. Due to the national elections in October 2014, the next dialogue session is expected to take place with the new executive in early 2015.

In 2014 the European Union continued its regular exchanges with some of the leading human rights organisations in the country. On the occasion of the 24 October 2014 elections, diplomatic personnel from the EU Member States' missions present in Botswana and from the EU Delegation carried out a joint diplomatic watch exercise in and around the capital that confirmed the calm and disciplined atmosphere on election day.

The EU Delegation and EU Member States present in the country are actively involved in the ongoing discussion on the creation of a comprehensive human rights strategy and national action plan, as well as a Human Rights Council institution that is compliant with the Paris Principles. EU Heads of Mission regularly discuss the situation of the San or Basarwa ethnic minority in Botswana. The EU Delegation and EU Member States present in Botswana have strived to consistently and jointly mark World Day against the Death Penalty and Human Rights Day to maximise the impact of their actions.

Since Botswana is a member of the Human Rights Council (HRC), related demarches have been conducted by the EU Delegation and EU Member States vis-à-vis local authorities. EU Member States present in Botswana and the EU Delegation have offered the government support to implement the recommendations of the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) process, which include having a public debate on issues such as the death penalty and same-sex relations.

As regards financial cooperation, Botswana benefits from the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR). A new EIDHR call for proposals worth EUR 0.6 million was issued in 2014 to lend support to civil society on issues such as human rights and civic education, rights of the child, rights of indigenous peoples and of persons belonging to minorities, LGBTI rights, the death penalty and increasing the transparency and accountability of the government vis-à-vis its citizens.

Burkina Faso

The EU priorities concern strengthening the institutional framework for the protection of human rights, the abolition of the death penalty, the elimination of torture, the improvement of detention conditions and the duration of trials. Other priorities include the reinforcement of the justice system, the promotion of freedom of expression, the protection of human rights defenders and civil society and the promotion and protection of women's and children's rights. However, recent political developments in the country may call for a revision of priorities in the short term and unconfirmed reports of acts of retribution against sympathisers of the former political majority may lead to a reassessment of the human rights situation.

Following the popular uprising which ousted President Compaoré, who had been in power for 27 years, there have been reports of some human rights violations that will need to be addressed. The newly appointed transitional authorities only took office in November 2014 and the EU is actively reaching out to engage with them.

The new government were quick to restore peace and order, and have also indicated their willingness to tackle corruption and reform the justice sector. While these are encouraging signs, there are also reports of extrajudicial settlements and persecution of individuals close to the former governing party (including acts of vandalism and looting).

As regards its cooperation, the EU will continue with the ongoing programme to support the justice sector. Further assistance is under consideration but the main areas of cooperation, including governance, will be maintained.

Burundi

In 2014 the principal EU objective in relation to human rights in Burundi was to see progress on the rule of law, including the protection of individual rights and fundamental freedoms. To support this overarching goal, the EU focused its attention on reinforcing the justice system, promoting and protecting human rights defenders and combating discrimination. The EU also encouraged the authorities to investigate cases of extrajudicial execution and torture, and to tackle impunity.

In the context of the upcoming 2015 elections, marked by the closing of the political space and an increasing politicisation of justice, the EU repeatedly raised a number of specific issues: the inclusiveness of the electoral process, respect for freedom of expression, of assembly and of demonstration, the right of political parties to conduct their activities without governmental interference and the right to a fair trial.

During the annual human rights dialogue with Burundi, the following issues were discussed: the pressures exercised by the authorities on human rights defenders (HRD), the difficulty HRD organisations have in conducting their activities, the politicisation of justice, the situation of women and of minorities, and the denial of civil liberties. In addition, in 2014 the EU held four political dialogue meetings with Burundi under Article 8 of the Cotonou Agreement. During these meetings the EU reiterated its request for political and civil rights to be respected and promoted, and stressed the importance of ensuring an independent justice system and tackling impunity. Human rights and democracy issues were also raised in bilateral meetings, including on the occasion of the EU-Africa Summit.

In terms of the EU dialogue with civil society organisations (CSOs), a consultation with more than 70 CSOs was organised in May 2014 in the context of the preparation of the EU country roadmap for engagement with civil society. In December 2014, a consultation with CSOs on possible future financial support for human rights activities also took place in Burundi.

There were some other significant developments in EU action on human rights in 2014. For instance, the EU intervened to remind the government of its commitment to publish a report following a broad consultation (*états généraux de la justice*) which revealed that justice in Burundi is still politicised and lacks independence. The Ministry of Justice organised a "sector review" allowing follow-up to most of the recommendations in the report.

The EU also engaged in action to promote and protect the rights of children and youth in various areas and alleviate discrimination against minority groups: this action was supported by EIDHR funds. The EU also provided legal assistance and medical and psychosocial support for children at risk and minors in prisons.

The EU followed closely the impact of a media law adopted in 2013 that endangers the freedom of expression, as well as the debate on two other important draft laws, concerning public demonstrations and CSOs. Finally, the EU followed the judicial case of Pierre Claver Mbonimpa, a human rights defender, and of members of the political party *Mouvement pour la Solidarité et la Démocratie*, and attended the court hearings.

In 2014 the EU issued statements on the following issues: the increasing political tension and the restriction of political and civil rights; the importance of respecting detainees' rights, with reference to the detention of Pierre Claver; the signature of the code of conduct and the political dialogue in the framework of the roadmap towards the 2015 elections.

In its conclusions of July 2014, the Foreign Affairs Council underlined that the 2015 elections in Burundi would be a crucial opportunity to consolidate recent progress and to contribute to a stronger future. The Council welcomed the adoption by consensus of the electoral law and the agreement by all parties on a code of conduct, but underlined its increasing concerns about the constraints on political space and civil liberties in Burundi.

On 18 September 2014, the European Parliament adopted a resolution on Burundi. This condemned the detention of human rights defender Pierre Claver Mbonimpa and, inter alia, called for his immediate and unconditional release. It also called the government of Burundi to comply with its international obligations with respect to human rights and expressed its concerns regarding impunity, arbitrary detention and the socio-economic situation.

As regards financial cooperation, the EU backed up its dialogue with support for the relevant reforms. Under the good governance programme (EUR 28 million), the EU supported the building of local courts, the training of judicial personnel and judges, and the provision of legal aid at communal level. The EU provided over EUR 400 000 of funding for activities with journalists. The EU also continued to support Burundi's civil society through a EUR 5.5 million project on reinforcing civil society organisations. On seven occasions the EU provided support to human rights defenders through the EIDHR emergency fund.

Cameroon

The EU's ongoing priorities as regards human rights and democracy in the framework of its relations with Cameroon are the fight against torture, improvement of detention conditions, protection of human rights defenders, promotion of children's rights, in particular the fight against child trafficking, the elimination of violence against women, and non-discrimination.

In 2014, the EU continued to engage actively in promoting human rights and democracy in Cameroon in various formats, including through the political dialogue under Article 8 of the Cotonou Agreement. During the year, the EU reiterated its pleas for the abolition of the death penalty in Cameroon and for the ratification of the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court.

In July, the EU and Cameroon held a session of the political dialogue devoted to security and the economy, in which the EU highlighted the need to ensure the full protection of human rights, including the right to a fair trial, in Cameroon's efforts to neutralise the Boko Haram insurgency. The second annual session of the dialogue took place in January 2015. The implementation of the 2013 Universal Periodic Review recommendations to Cameroon constituted a fundamental part of this dialogue.

The EU Delegation in Yaoundé also maintained contacts with State bodies responsible for the protection of human rights and promotion of democracy. In the course of 2014, the Head of Delegation met with the Presidents of the Cameroonian National Commission for Human Rights and Freedoms, the National Communication Council and the National Electoral Commission. The EU continued its dialogue with civil society. Regular meetings were held with human rights defenders, including those involved in defending the rights of LGBTI. These meetings succeeded in stimulating better coordination amongst the defenders, who then moved on to create a platform for working closely together and sharing information. Furthermore, the EU, with the full participation of Member States, elaborated a roadmap for engagement with civil society in Cameroon.

As regards financial cooperation, Cameroon benefits from the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR). Under the EIDHR, the projects proposed for support in 2014 focused on the fight against trafficking of human beings, sexual exploitation of children and the use of forced labour in the traditional societies (Lamidias) of northern Cameroon. Ongoing EIDHR projects continued their activities in the fields of media visibility of prison conditions and improvement of human rights in Cameroonian prisons (which included providing training for judiciary and penitentiary personnel).

The EU also continued providing financial support through the Non-State Actors programme and the EU-FAO Forest Law Enforcement, Governance and Trade programme (FLEGT) in sectors relevant to human rights. These included access to justice (for minors, people living with HIV/AIDS, etc.) and governance of natural resources (including the fight against land grabbing, recognition of local indigenous rights and resolution of conflicts related to land).

Cape Verde

Cape Verde remains a country with a good record on respect for democratic principles, human rights and fundamental freedoms. The EU's main objectives in the framework of its relations with Cape Verde are to support the authorities' efforts in the areas which still raise concerns, in particular gender-based violence and discrimination against women, rights of the child and non-discrimination of migrants.

In 2014, the EU continued to engage in a regular dialogue on the consolidation of democracy and human rights in the context of the EU-Cape Verde Special Partnership. This partnership provides for a reinforced political dialogue on democracy, human rights, the rule of law and good governance. The action plan for the special partnership pays special attention to women's and children's rights, the situation of migrants, combating domestic violence, improvement of the judicial system, fighting corruption and promoting good governance.

The EU continued to provide financial support to projects contributing to the improvement of the rights of women and children and people with disabilities, as well as to the reinforcement of civil society in Cape Verde. During 2014, the country also benefited from an EU-financed PALOP (Portuguese-speaking African countries) programme in the area of civil and political rights.

Central African Republic

In 2014 the European Union continued its efforts to improve the human rights situation in the Central African Republic (CAR), focusing on a regular dialogue with the transitional authorities and supported by a number of different EU instruments. The dialogue was facilitated by the accessibility of the new authorities, which took up their duties in January 2014, to the international community. The new authorities, at different levels, gave particular attention to human rights and expressed their solidarity with the exceptionally challenging and sometimes intolerable situation faced by the citizens of the CAR, in contrast to the position taken by the government in previous years.

Activities in the human rights field undertaken by the EU and its Member States in the CAR were strongly influenced by the worsening security situation both in the capital and throughout the country, the issue of returning refugees (estimated to be around 420 000 in number), the situation with regard to internally displaced persons and the fight against impunity. The ICC announced the opening of an investigation into war crimes and crimes against humanity and has stated its intention to open an office in Bangui in the next few months. In September, the Human Rights Council in Geneva prolonged by a year the mandate of the independent expert Ms Keita Bocoum, whose recommendations gave particular attention to the need to ensure transitional justice. Elsewhere, the UN Security Council adopted sanctions against two individuals and a further twenty CAR citizens and entities have been proposed for possible future sanctions.

In 2014, the EU and its Member States broadened the scope of their action in the CAR by following a comprehensive approach, including a CSDP operation (EUFOR-RCA) with a mandate expiring on 15 March 2015, and the creation of the Békou Trust Fund, which is managed by the European Commission and received contributions from the EU, France, Germany and the Netherlands to a total amount of EUR 74 million in its first year. The first disbursements from this fund, with a mainly social focus, will begin in January 2015.

During 2014 the EU adopted eight declarations on the CAR, and the country was the subject of FAC conclusions on seven occasions. On 13 March, the European Parliament adopted a resolution reiterating its extreme concern regarding the situation in the CAR and underlining the urgent importance of action on the humanitarian front. A number of local statements were issued jointly with other international partners represented in the country, particularly in the context of the international mediation exercise and the International Contact Group.

Beyond informal contacts and the regular dialogue with CAR authorities and civil society representatives, the EU and France also delivered a demarche to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs regarding votes to be held at the 69th UNGA session, in particular on the use of the death penalty. The CAR's vote in favour of adopting a moratorium against the death penalty can be construed as a positive signal and is certainly an encouraging sign regarding the prospects for dialogue on human rights in the country. During 2014 the CAR also decided to align with EU positions in votes held in the UN General Assembly 3rd Committee.

Regarding financial support, several projects funded by the thematic and Non-State Actors budget lines are under way. For instance, under the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights, a project is being funded to promote the rights of indigenous and forest people and strengthen their access to justice. Through the Non-State Actors budget line, the EU is also financing the promotion of women's business initiatives in the CAR. However, after one year and despite some good results the project had to be suspended on 1 October due to security problems in Bangui.

The EU is also supporting civil society actors working to establish viable long-term peace in the CAR. Other projects on gender and on freedom of expression are also being financed. In addition, in 2014 a EUR 1 million project to support the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights was approved and will focus on prevention of human rights violations.

Chad

In 2014, the EU's main objectives in respect of the promotion of human rights in Chad remained as follows: reform of the justice system, reform of the security forces, promotion of children's and women's rights, promotion of democracy and the fight against the death penalty. EU action took various forms, from political dialogue to technical cooperation, in particular through the European Development Fund, the Instrument contributing to Stability and Peace and the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights.

In the framework of Article 8 of the Cotonou Agreement, the EU and its Member States held a political dialogue session with Chadian authorities in June 2014. In this dialogue the EU raised concerns on several human rights issues, and in particular justice reform, detention conditions and the trial of former Chadian dictator Hissène Habré. The EU also started observing the trial of 21 of Hissène Habré's co-accused, which opened in N'djamena on 14 November. The EU supports, through the Instrument for Stability, the holding of events to raise awareness of the Habré trial and its implications.

More broadly, a project implemented by a Chadian human rights organisation, funded by the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights, started in November 2014 with the aim of discussing questions regarding transitional justice in Chad.

As part of the programme to support security sector reform, two contracts with NGOs were signed with the aim of improving relations between the security forces and the population, in the framework of greater accountability.

Concerning justice reform, a survey funded by the EU was conducted on Chadian citizens' perceptions of the justice system. The results of this study will help with the design of a new programme to improve access to justice. To this end, *Avocats Sans Frontières Belgique* has been supported since April 2014 in implementing a two-year project focusing on improving Chadian citizens' knowledge of judicial procedures and helping them to protect their rights. The EU continued to follow the process of adoption of a new penal code that should, among other priorities, abolish the death penalty almost entirely (adoption of the penal code has been postponed to 2015). However, the EU has repeatedly expressed concern at the last-minute introduction of provisions criminalising homosexuality.

The EU continued to work closely with human rights organisations and hosted several meetings with civil society, in particular to discuss the implementation of the recommendations accepted by Chadian authorities during the Universal Periodic Review which was held in October 2013.

Union of the Comoros

The EU objectives on human rights and democracy in the framework of its relations with the Union of the Comoros are to continue promoting respect for human rights, democracy and the rule of law, with a particular focus on electoral processes, justice and the fight against corruption, as well as women's and children's rights.

The EU continued to engage in human rights and democracy discussions with Comoros in various formats, including through frequent high-level missions, regular policy dialogue and development cooperation. Furthermore, in its intensified political dialogue with the Comorian authorities in the context of ongoing electoral support, the EU has repeatedly reiterated its pleas for free, transparent and credible electoral processes, on the basis of the recently revised legal framework and structured consultations with stakeholders. A greater gender balance within electoral institutions and for political participation has also been promoted through both legal reform and widespread awareness-raising campaigns.

With the renewal of the Union's and Islands' legislative and executive powers and the first ever municipal council elections, the 2014-2016 electoral cycle could either confirm the country's progress towards democracy, national integration and development or increase the risk of turning back towards chronic instability, separatism and poverty.

Other significant developments with regard to human rights on which the EU took a position in 2014 relate mainly to the judicial system. In accordance with new National Development Strategy priorities for 2015-2019, the EU is currently supporting the development of judicial sector reform, aiming at greater independence, integrity, efficiency, equity and access. Substantial EU support for the implementation of the reform is provided for under the 11th EDF.

During the year, the EU stepped up its dialogue with civil society organisations by adopting a joint EU/France roadmap for EU engagement with civil society for 2014-2017, which is financially supported via the Non-State Actors/Local Authorities (NSA/LA) budget line and the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights. Five NSA/LA projects are ongoing and additional calls for proposals under the NSA/LA programme and the EIDHR are planned for 2015.

In 2014, Comoros underwent its second Universal Periodic Review (UPR) – 125 recommendations were accepted and 9 rejected. The rejected recommendations related mainly to respect for freedom of religion and sexual orientation. The accepted recommendations relate mainly to the ratification of international treaties on human rights, collaboration with UN human rights bodies, the independence of human rights and anti-corruption institutions and actions, abolition of the death penalty, access to justice, prison conditions, women's and children's rights and basic social services. In this context, the EU and France have provided capacity-building assistance to the National Human Rights Commission.

Republic of the Congo (Congo Brazzaville)

The EU objectives on human rights and democracy in the framework of its relations with the Republic of the Congo are the fight against torture, the improvement of detention conditions, the sound administration of justice and the promotion and protection of vulnerable people's rights. In 2014, the EU continued to face difficulties in having a constructive dialogue on human rights and democracy with the Republic of the Congo. Despite the fact that there was no specific annual human rights dialogue with all the authorities concerned, there were discussions on human rights in the bilateral meetings with the Minister for Justice and Human Rights and with the Minister for the Interior and Decentralisation. In this context, the EU has reiterated its pleas to both ministers for investigations in cases of allegations of abuse and torture by the Congolese security forces, for the prosecution of the perpetrators of such crimes, and for human rights NGOs to be allowed to monitor and visit detention centres. In spite of the EU's requests, the situation has not improved and cases of ill-treatment and torture in places of detention continue to be reported. The EU also called on the Minister for Justice to adopt the long-awaited decrees implementing the law to protect the rights of indigenous peoples.

During the year, the EU continued its dialogue with civil society organisations through numerous informal and formal meetings held to share views and to discuss the main human rights concerns. The annual meeting with human rights defenders took place in July.

Local elections took place on 28 September and partial senatorial elections were organised on 12 October 2014. Prior to these elections, the EU met the Minister for the Interior and Decentralisation to be informed about the census of Congolese citizens of voting age and about the electoral process. The main problems regarding the electoral process raised during the meeting (the credibility of the electoral roll, the independence of the electoral commission, the electoral boundaries) are yet to be resolved.

In 2014, the EU signalled a noticeable deterioration concerning freedom of expression, of assembly and of the press in the Republic of the Congo. The EU issued a local statement to condemn the attack on Elie Smith, a Cameroonian journalist, and his sister in Brazzaville, when four men raped her and threatened to kill him. Many observers think this aggression was a response to the posting in Elie Smith's Facebook account of pictures of opposition supporters who were themselves assaulted by unknown people during a political meeting against the amendment of the constitution. The Republic of the Congo underwent its Universal Periodic Review (UPR) in October 2013. The 25th Session of the Human Rights Council in March 2014 was informed of the government's acceptance of 164 recommendations out of 171. Seven recommendations were rejected, for example on increasing the participation of women in legislative decision-making to 25 %, on the fight against all forms of discrimination based on sexual orientation, on extending a standing invitation to all thematic special procedures enforced by specific human rights bodies, and on the ratification of the Agreement on the Privileges and Immunities of the International Criminal Court.

In October, the UN General Assembly re-elected the Republic of the Congo to the Human Rights Council for a period of three years. This membership has not proven to have a positive impact on the human rights situation in the country. The Republic of the Congo also does not have a good track record on drafting and submitting reports to the various UN committees. On a positive note, in 2014, the Republic of the Congo ratified the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and its Optional Protocol.

As regards financial cooperation, the Republic of the Congo has benefited for the first time from the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR). Under the EIDHR, a first call for proposals, with a budget of EUR 700 000, is due to be published in early 2015.

In 2014, the EU also continued providing financial support to the Republic of the Congo in the area of justice and human rights through the project of activities to strengthen the rule of law and associations (PAREDA). In November 2014, work to improve detention conditions in Brazzaville, Dolisie and Pointe-Noire was completed. The EU also funded the activities of a local NGO to improve the detainees' access to health care and food at the Pointe-Noire detention centre, to improve hygiene and sanitation and to promote responsible sexual behaviour. The EU continued to support the General Inspectorate of Courts and Judicial Services by supplying equipment and technical assistance. The EU also financed legal assistance to the poor, with a view to reducing the length of pre-trial detention and prison overcrowding. To date, this project has led to the provisional release of almost 100 offenders.

On gender equality, 48 homeless girls followed a vocational training programme financed by the EU and seven of these girls have already been recruited by an employer. The EU is also supporting a project led by journalists aimed at informing rural women about their rights. Another EU-financed project trained 225 paralegals and 50 CSOs on women's rights. This project has empowered women through the creation of 41 savings groups in Brazzaville and Ouesso, and the funding of 188 income-generating activities and business training for 284 women.

An EU project has ensured the dissemination of legal texts which protect widows and orphans, and granted loans to 30 widows to engage in an economic activity. In addition, 144 young people living with disabilities are currently receiving vocational training and 60 of them have started literacy classes. The EU also supports a network of 47 ORA schools benefiting 2921 indigenous children. Finally, 700 disadvantaged young people received vocational training and 500 street children benefited from an emergency shelter in Pointe-Noire.

Côte d'Ivoire

The main EU human rights priorities in the Côte d'Ivoire include the right to security, justice and the rule of law, the fight against impunity, reconciliation, support for democracy, the protection of human rights defenders, children's rights, and gender equality. The EU also continues to promote national reconciliation and stresses the need for impartial, independent justice and for the modernisation of the police force.

Through its permanent political contacts and its official political dialogue under Article 8 of the Cotonou Agreement, the EU has a channel for dialogue and political exchange with the government on issues relating to human rights, justice and security reforms. The latest session was held with the Minister for Foreign Affairs in October 2014. The EU also continues its permanent dialogue with political parties from all affiliations, as well as civil society and NGOs.

In 2014, the EU renewed for another year its restrictive measures against 15 Ivorians implicated in the post-electoral crisis.

During Côte d'Ivoire's Universal Periodic Review in April 2014, the EU recognised the progress made, such as the ratification of the Rome Statute in 2013 and the adoption of legislation on the protection of human rights defenders. However, there was concern about violence against women, violation of children's rights, including child labour and trafficking, and justice and reconciliation. As regards financial cooperation, EU budgetary support (EUR 115 million) has been an essential leverage for the opening of three courts in the western region (Guiglo, Issia and Man) and for the adoption of the policy document on judicial reform and the related action plan. Thirty-six courts of first instance dealing with both civil and criminal affairs are currently operational in the country. The EU Delegation followed the progress in setting up *cours d'assises* trials, which have been re-launched but have not yet addressed the crimes committed during the post-electoral crisis.

Under the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR), 54 women victims of sexual violence received legal and medical support in 2014. Training on gender issues and governance was organised in Abidjan, providing information to some 30 Ivorian journalists. Support (EUR 2 million) has been given to initiatives focused on the fight against impunity, land issues and women's rights – including advocacy against female genital mutilation (FGM). Through the European Instrument for Stability (IfS) EUR 2 million has been granted to a reconciliation project aiming to build trust and peaceful collaboration between the national police and local populations, thus strengthening the legitimate authority of the police force. The project focusses on three communes of Abidjan: Marcory, Treichville and Yopougon, all hard-hit by violent social instability and disrespect for national authorities following the crisis. Similarly, the EU is dedicating EUR 10 million to assist the government in the reintegration of 7 500 former combatants.

Democratic Republic of the Congo

In 2014 the EU continued to promote respect for human rights, democracy and the rule of law in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). Despite the absence of a structured and dedicated human rights dialogue, the EU has regularly engaged in human rights and democracy discussions with the DRC authorities in various formats.

During informal consultations with the DRC government, as well as in public statements and speeches, the EU has underlined several legislative priorities, in particular the transposition into national law of the Rome Statute, the abolition of the death penalty, a new electoral law and a thorough reform of the family code. The EU also recalled the need to strengthen the protection of civil liberties, including via systematic, thorough, impartial and transparent prosecution of perpetrators of human rights violations.

The EU made several public statements and delivered démarches to the Congolese authorities to raise concerns regarding the targeting of political opponents and political activists in the country. Other statements were issued on the following: the judgment by the International Criminal Court regarding Germain Katanga, the armed attack against the director of the Virunga National Park, and the Minova rape trial. In addition, the EU has made statements on the publication of UN reports on sexual violence in the DRC and on extra-judicial killings conducted by the Congolese police (during the so-called Operation Likofi). The EU also publicly expressed its deep concern about the decision by the DRC authorities to expel Mr Scott Campbell, Director of the UN Joint Human Rights Office, after the publication of its report.

In April 2014, the DRC was reviewed under the second cycle of the Universal Periodic Review at the UN Human Rights Council. Out of 229 recommendations, 190 were accepted and 39 noted by the DRC authorities.

Following the 2011 legislative and presidential elections, the EU sent a follow-on mission led by MEP Mariya Gabriel to the DRC in June 2014 to assess the implementation of the recommendations of the 2011 election observation mission.

In October 2014, the Sakharov prize was awarded by the Conference of Presidents of the European Parliament to Dr Denis Mukwege for his fight for the protection of women's rights in the DRC. The 59-year-old gynaecologist founded the Panzi Hospital in Bukavu in 1998, where he has treated victims of sexual violence who have sustained serious injuries ever since.

The EU continued to advocate the implementation of the 2012 action plan to end the recruitment of children by the national armed forces and security forces. The EU also supported the UN campaign to end recruitment and use of children by government armed forces in conflict by 2016.

In its conclusions of July 2014, the EU Foreign Affairs Council confirmed the importance of unconditional voluntary disarmament of FDLR forces inside the DRC, and its willingness to support this process. With regard to the demobilisation of M23 and other armed groups, the EU, together with other international envoys, stated that no amnesty could be granted for grave human rights violations. The EU reminded all parties of their obligation to ensure protection of civilians and to respect international law, including human rights and international humanitarian law. The Council recalled the specific responsibility of the Congolese authorities in this respect and underlined the importance of concerted action to reform the justice sector, including military justice.

The EU continued to provide financial support to the DRC in the following areas: strengthening of the Congolese judicial system, gender-based violence, children and armed conflict, and protection of human rights defenders.

Djibouti

In terms of human rights, the priorities for the EU in Djibouti were firstly to encourage the dialogue between the government of Djibouti and the opposition coalition in order for Djibouti to put in place democratic reforms and for civil liberties to be better respected, and secondly to support the development of civil society as a way to promote fundamental rights.

Concerns regarding political space for the opposition and the repression that followed the contested 2013 legislative election were raised by the EU during the latest EU-Djibouti political dialogue meeting held in February 2014. Unfortunately, human rights defenders are regularly harassed by the police, sometimes banned from leaving the country, their passports being seized, which has also been the case for political opponents in the course of 2014. An EU initiative to organise an event inviting artists to discuss freedom of creation on International Human Rights Day in December was banned by the authorities.

However, some progress was made in December when the government and the opposition signed a framework agreement on political dialogue which includes the amnesty of opposition members condemned since 2013, the restoration of the rights of people who have irregularly lost their job or been suspended, and the taking up of the parliamentary seats officially won by the opposition parties. Other measures include the creation of an independent joint electoral commission, and a legal statute of the opposition. In addition, the agreement provides for reform of communication law and the reinforcement of mechanisms ensuring respect for human rights and civil liberties. In 2015, the EU will closely monitor whether the reforms provided for in this framework agreement are indeed implemented.

In June 2014, the EU and the government of Djibouti agreed on the European Development Fund's National Indicative Programme, which provides for an allocation of EUR 8 million for the period 2014-2020 to support civil society and gender equality. Furthermore, under the thematic budget line "Civil Society Organisations and Local Authorities", EUR 4 million will be provided for the period 2014-2017 to support NGOs and local authorities in Djibouti.

Equatorial Guinea

The main EU priorities in Equatorial Guinea remain the observance of the moratorium on the death penalty, the improvement of conditions on freedom of expression, effective political pluralism, support for civil society and re-engagement with the authorities on political dialogue. While significant progress was achieved in 2014 with the adoption of a moratorium on the death penalty, other steps hoped for by the EU did not materialise. The EU remains concerned about the overall human rights situation in Equatorial Guinea.

The EU continued to engage in human rights and democracy discussions with Equatorial Guinea in various formats. In view of the EU-Africa Summit, the EU conducted a preparatory mission to Equatorial Guinea in February 2014. On this occasion the EU discussed human rights and democracy matters with the relevant authorities. The main issue on the agenda was the follow-up of individual cases of people held in detention, both in terms of conditions and respect for due process.

The annual political dialogue with the government, proposed by the EU for December 2014, was postponed to 2015. However, at local level, the EU Delegation maintained a dialogue with civil society organisations.

As regards democratisation, small but perceptible progress was achieved with the holding of the *Mesa de Dialogo* (dialogue table) between the government and the opposition parties – this had been encouraged for some time by the EU. The EU also monitored closely the whole process of the national dialogue between 7 and 15 November, having been invited to observe. The EU will continue to encourage all parties both to continue their dialogue and more importantly to implement fully all measures agreed.

In 2014, Equatorial Guinea underwent its second Universal Periodic Review (UPR). The exercise confirmed an overall lack of progress in implementing the recommendations from the 2009 UPR, particularly with regard to torture, arbitrary detention, the rule of law, freedom of association, press freedom, anti-corruption and social and economic rights. The EU supported civil society in preparing their contribution to the UPR and will monitor closely the implementation of those recommendations accepted by the authorities of Equatorial Guinea.

As regards financial cooperation, the country benefits from the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR). Support amounting to EUR 300 000 will be granted to civil society in 2015.

Eritrea

During meetings with the Eritrean government, including formal Article 8 dialogue sessions, the EU raised the human rights situation, and in particular violations of freedom of expression and freedom of religion, arbitrary detention and poor implementation of the rule of law. The EU urged the Eritrean authorities to improve the overall situation, their cooperation with the UN human rights system, including with the UN Special Rapporteur on Human Rights in Eritrea and the newly created Commission of Inquiry on Human Rights in Eritrea.

The EU remains particularly concerned about the fate of detained journalists and prisoners of conscience imprisoned for their political and religious beliefs. The EU repeatedly requested information and access to those in detention. More generally, the EU consistently requested that these prisoners be brought to trial and charged accordingly or released immediately and unconditionally. On 18 September 2014, the HR/VP Spokesperson issued a statement on the situation of political prisoners in Eritrea. Among other things, the HR/VP called on the Eritrean authorities to release Dawit Isaak, a journalist and Eritrean-European citizen held incommunicado in detention since 2001.

More positively, in 2014, Eritrea ratified the UN Convention Against Torture and also participated in the second Universal Periodic Review (even though it only accepted 100 of the 200 recommendations). Eritrea also voted in favour of the moratorium on the use of the death penalty at the 69th UN General Assembly.

In 2014, Eritrea participated actively in the preparation of the EU-Horn of Africa Migration Route Initiative, now called the Khartoum Process. Eritrea is one of the four core countries in the Khartoum Process and is among the members of the steering committee agreed in November during the ministerial conference in Rome. Within this process, the focus is on human trafficking and people smuggling, the most pressing challenges for the region. In September 2014, Eritrea also acceded to the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons. In the meantime, the government of Eritrea has announced its intention to apply its proclamation No 82, limiting again the duration of national service to 18 months for the next rotations – an important decision since the indefinite duration of national service is a major "push factor" for migration.

Ethiopia

The EU's long-term human rights and democracy objectives for Ethiopia are to support Ethiopia in continuing its engagement with international and regional human rights bodies, as well as in implementing its national human rights action plan; to create a more enabling environment for CSOs to promote and protect human rights and good governance; to enhance freedom of expression and association and people's ability to participate in political processes; to improve access to justice and fair trials, and to reduce prevalence of harmful traditional practices and gender-based violence. The EU is engaged in a regular dialogue with the Ethiopian government on these issues, in particular but not exclusively through the Article 8 dialogue with the authorities, where the EU repeatedly reiterates its pleas for respect for human rights and in particular political and civil rights. While continuous progress is being made on rights relating to education and health in Ethiopia, restrictions on freedom of the media, of association and of peaceful assembly have increased in the period leading up to the May 2015 general election. The Anti-Terrorism Proclamation (ATP) legislation is seen as being used to constrain activities of the political opposition and the media. In 2014, arrests and trials of bloggers, journalists and political opponents have been initiated. In May 2014, Ethiopia underwent the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) for the second time and accepted 181 of the 252 recommendations made. The EU participated in the preparations for the UPR, and a series of possible recommendations, such as the issuance of invitations to special representatives on human rights, were discussed with EU Member States. In response to recent developments in the country, the EU issued two statements in 2014. In May the EU highlighted the importance of enhancing political space and called on the Ethiopian government to ensure that the Anti-Terrorism Proclamation is not used to curb freedom of expression or association. In the July statement, the EU Heads of Mission expressed serious concerns about developments in the case of ten bloggers and journalists charged under the Anti-Terrorism Proclamation, and about the arrests of opposition members.

Regarding democratic developments in the country, the EU has taken the initiative to establish an electoral coordination group to discuss preparations for the upcoming 2015 general election and facilitate the adoption of a common analysis and position. The EU Heads and Deputy Heads of Mission have also engaged in dialogues with all political parties in the country to promote multi-party democracy and have initiated field missions to the different regions of Ethiopia to assess the pre-electoral situation.

With regard to the promotion of women's rights, the EU drafted its first Ethiopia-specific EU gender strategy in 2014. The strategy encourages coordination among the EU Member States and the EU Delegation in order to speak with one voice and together address the gaps in gender mainstreaming, programme support and policy dialogue. On International Women's Day the EU also organised a successful event with panel discussions on women's political and economic empowerment.

During the year, the EU also continued its extensive dialogue with civil society organisations. The EU is a co-chair of the Civil Society Sector Working Group, facilitating exchange and cooperation between the government of Ethiopia and civil society organisations. Through this dialogue the EU, in cooperation with civil society groups, helped the government to revise parts of the 70/30 directive of the civil society legislation, which facilitated the work of NGOs in the country.

CSOs are also important implementing partners in the EU's sectoral work and in programmes such as the EU-Ethiopia Civil Society Fund (CSF) and the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR). The CSF has the status of a local fund, thereby allowing it to fund projects related to human rights and governance, and as such is supporting this severely challenged category of CSOs. In 2014 23 new projects worth over EUR 4 million were started under the EIDHR and CSF, covering, amongst other things, issues such as women's rights, combatting FGM and harmful traditional practices, protection of children from and prevention of sexual abuse, empowerment of the elderly and minorities, prevention of gender-based violence and human rights education.

Gabon

The EU objectives on human rights and democracy in the framework of its relations with Gabon are to address the concerns and challenges regarding detention conditions, the issue of "ritual" crimes, women's rights, trafficking in human beings, including children, and the transparency and inclusivity of the electoral process. Improvements are also necessary with regard to delays in the judicial system, the large number of persons held in provisional detention, and discrimination against immigrants and indigenous communities. Financial and human resources need to be boosted and corruption reduced to increase the effectiveness of the judicial system.

The EU continued to engage in human rights and democracy discussions with Gabon in various formats within the framework of the Cotonou Agreement. After a year of stalemate, political dialogue with the Gabonese authorities under Article 8 of the Cotonou Agreement resumed in March 2014. The parties discussed the reform of the judicial system, detention conditions and crimes involving the removal of organs (so-called "ritual" crimes). There was no specific annual human rights dialogue with all the authorities concerned but bilateral meetings with the newly appointed minister responsible for human rights, equal opportunities and Gabonese citizens abroad included discussions on the latest developments and government efforts to promote human rights and democracy in Gabon.

Furthermore, the EU has repeatedly conducted ad hoc démarches and outreach activities with the Gabonese authorities in the context of the Gabonese presidency of the UN Human Rights Council (UNHRC) in 2014. The main deliverables were increased cooperation and alignment between the EU and Gabon, mainly in preparation for the United Nations General Assembly Third Committee meetings and on multilateral issues of common concern.

In July 2014 the EU Delegation, in agreement with the Heads of Diplomatic Missions of the EU, issued a local statement to welcome the ratification by Gabon of the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of Disabled Persons.

The EU Delegation maintained its dialogue with civil society and human rights organisations, and met the representatives of the relevant official bodies, in particular the Directorate General for Human Rights and the National Human Rights Commission.

On 5 February 2014 the European Parliament adopted a legislative resolution on the conclusion of the Protocol setting out the fishing opportunities and the financial contribution provided for in the Fisheries Partnership Agreement between the European Union and the Gabonese Republic.

In 2014, Gabon was supposed to undergo a mid-term review of its human rights record as part of the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) mechanism, but the exercise did not take place. Discussions are currently ongoing between the relevant authorities on whether to postpone it to 2015, or to focus directly on the UPR, due to take place in 2016.

As regards financial cooperation, the country benefits from the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR). A call for tenders will be launched in 2015/2016 with an allocation of EUR 600 000 to support civil society projects on human rights.

The Gambia

Throughout 2014, the EU priorities in The Gambia remained freedom of expression and of the media, the death penalty, violence against women, non-discrimination of LGBTI persons, detention conditions, unlawful and arbitrary arrests and detentions, as well as support for civil society and human right defenders.

The state of democracy, respect for the rule of law and the human rights situation in The Gambia were of concern to the EU. Arbitrary arrests and detentions without respect for due process have continued alongside a lack of respect for freedom of the press and of minority groups. However, a positive trend has been identified in the field of women's and children's rights, where legislation has been implemented to protect these groups.

Human rights were discussed at the latest meeting of the intensified political dialogue under Article 8 of the Cotonou Agreement in April. The meeting led to an agreement on commitments by the Gambian authorities and to follow-up meetings with cabinet members. However, a recent EU assessment has revealed that the government has so far not translated these commitments into concrete results. In November, the government of The Gambia notified the EU that it intended to discontinue the political dialogue under Article 8.

In October 2014, The Gambia underwent its second Universal Periodic Review. The EU Delegation contributed to the preparations through a review of relevant developments since the country's first UPR in 2010. The EU Delegation jointly financed a public screening of the UPR session with the OHCHR and the UK and US embassies in Banjul. Government officials, NGOs, members of the diplomatic corps and the local press participated in the event.

The EU Delegation and EU Member States represented in Banjul followed closely the visit of the UN Special Rapporteurs (SRs) on Extrajudicial, Summary or Arbitrary Executions and on Torture and other Cruel, Inhumane and Degrading Treatment or Punishment in November. The SRs were denied access to the security wing and death row of Mile 2 prison and decided not to continue their planned visits to other detention centres, due to this breach by The Gambia of the agreed terms of reference.

Detention conditions in Gambian prisons in general have continued to be of concern to the EU. Furthermore, special court sessions, partly funded by the UK Bilateral Project Fund, were organised during the summer to reduce the backlog of cases in the judiciary.

In February, the HR/VP issued a statement on behalf of the EU when the President of The Gambia gave an inflammatory speech targeting LGBTI persons on the occasion of the National Day. In response to the President's signing of a law criminalising "aggravated homosexuality", the EU and Member States' Heads of Mission accredited to The Gambia adopted a local statement in November.

The EU Delegation continued its advocacy against the death penalty on World Day against the Death Penalty, when an article co-signed by the EU Chargée d'Affaires a.i. and the UK Ambassador underlining the arguments against capital punishment was published in local newspapers. The EU Delegation marked International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women through an event organised with locally based UN organisations.

Furthermore, the EU Delegation continued to address issues of concern through various development projects. Through the 10th EDF Governance Programme (EUR 10 million), the EU continued to promote access to justice and legal education. Furthermore, the EU is contributing EUR 870 000 to the improvement of the Gambian media environment in a project to be implemented by UNESCO. Workshops with media stakeholders have been organised throughout the year.

Through the small grants programme for human rights defenders, financed by the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR), the EU provided financial support to a journalist who urgently needed to relocate because of concerns about his own and his family's safety.

Three EU funded projects addressing women's rights and the economic empowerment of women (EUR 800 000) are currently being implemented.

Ghana

The EU's key human rights objectives in its relations with Ghana are to promote access to justice, good governance, children's rights and effective implementation of non-discriminatory policies. Further challenges, such as improving harsh detention conditions, ensuring social and economic rights, and the elimination of child trafficking and abuse, were also addressed in the EU's dialogue with the government during 2014.

The process of amending the 1992 Constitution, which was discussed in the political dialogue between the EU and Ghana, has been put on hold after a writ was filed at the Supreme Court seeking to nullify the work done to amend the constitution. It is still unclear what the outcome will be.

In July, the parliament adopted the National Anti-Corruption Action Plan (NACAP) to strengthen public accountability. Under the 11th EDF, a new programme on governance has been formulated to support the fight against corruption and promote accountability.

The EU had a series of meetings with civil society organisations as part of the process of developing the EU country roadmap for engagement with civil society for the period 2014-2017. Some of the priorities identified include support for the right to information and an inclusive dialogue on gender equality and women's empowerment.

An EIDHR-funded children's rights project in the Central Region of Ghana has been making good progress in advocating respect for and protection of children's rights. School enrolment has increased and community child protection committees have been formed and trained. Community meetings have been held periodically to discuss the issue of children's rights. Under the EIDHR, the EU also launched a call for proposals focusing on conflict mediation and prevention in preparation for the 2016 general election.

In January, the EU held a human rights dialogue with human rights defenders in Ghana with wide participation from all sides.

In December, Ghana ratified the Optional Protocol to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict. The EU welcomed the ratification in a local statement.

Guinea

After the return to constitutional order, relations between the EU and Guinea entered a period of normalisation. The holding of peaceful and inclusive elections in September 2013 permitted the resumption of EU development cooperation and the arms embargo was lifted thanks to the progress in security sector reform (SSR). Nevertheless, the individual sanctions against five people presumed to be responsible for the September 2009 massacre are still in force. In the coming months, Guinea needs to keep working on the consolidation of state authority, law and good governance. The reform of the justice sector to fight against impunity and corruption is still a challenge for the country. The Ebola outbreak has severely affected Guinea since March and may also impact on the political and security situation.

The EU's objectives in relation to human rights in Guinea include the continuation of an inclusive electoral process, the strengthening of internal security in line with SSR principles, the strengthening of the rule of law and the fight against corruption.

The EU continued to engage in human rights and democracy discussions with Guinea in various formats, including through the regular political dialogue under Article 8 of the Cotonou Agreement, which resumed in 2014. The EU has expressed concern over the need to reinforce the administration of justice and make progress in the fight against impunity, in particular as regards the judicial case in relation to the 28 September 2009 massacre, the investigations into cases of violence committed in the Forest Region in 2013 and more recently against the Ebola awareness-raising mission in the village of Womé. Prolonged illegal detentions, for more than two years in the case of some military staff, are also a major concern for human rights defenders and associations.

Guinea's report on the second Universal Periodic Review (UPR) is ongoing, with support from the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), and is expected to cover the implementation of the 105 recommendations of the first UPR in 2010.

In 2014 the EU, in coordination with Member States and the United Nations, continued to provide technical and financial support to Guinea through the 10th European Development Fund programmes. The main activities of these programmes cover support for the reform of the justice sector (PARJU) and for civil society in its efforts to fight impunity (in particular in relation to the 28 September massacre); consolidation of democracy (support for the National Assembly and civic and electoral education); decentralisation and devolution (PASDD); strengthening the capacities of victims' associations and human rights defenders; support for the Ministry of Human Rights in the preparation of its consultation process with a view to the adoption of a national policy on human rights; support for security sector reform (PARSS) and capacity-building activities for civil society and the media. Through the EU-funded thematic programmes, various projects implemented by NGOs continued in the field of women's empowerment and women's and children's rights.

Guinea-Bissau

The credible and peaceful general election, held in April and May 2014, was a milestone for the country's return to constitutional normality. In this new political context, the EU's main objectives on democracy and human rights in Guinea-Bissau are to support the new authorities' efforts to consolidate democratic stability and the rule of law and to improve the country's human rights record, which had deteriorated significantly during the two-year transitional period that followed the military coup d'état in 2012.

To this end, the EU has suspended the application of the appropriate measures under Article 96 of the Cotonou Agreement (Council Decision 2011/492/EU), in order to engage with and provide direct support to the democratically elected authorities in their efforts to consolidate the democratic institutions, to ensure respect for human rights and promote reconciliation. However, the commitments made by Guinea-Bissau in the framework of the Article 96 consultation remain applicable, particularly regarding respect for human rights, the fight against impunity, reform of the security sector and the fight against illegal trafficking, including trafficking of human beings.

After the inauguration of the elected authorities, the EU resumed its political dialogue with Guinea-Bissau. Respect for human rights, the rule of law and the fight against impunity have been raised in our dialogue with the authorities at the highest level, including during the Prime Minister's visit to Brussels in July 2014.

In 2014, the EU continued providing financial support to projects funded through the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR) which are aimed at reinforcing the capacity of civil society and respect for the rights of women, children and detainees.

Kenya

During 2014, the EU has been active in numerous areas of human rights, with a particular focus on the following: the implementation of the 2010 constitution, impunity, extra-judicial killings, and human rights defenders (HRDs).

The EU maintains a regular dialogue with civil society on human rights issues, including at the level of Heads of Mission. There is no formal human rights dialogue with the government of Kenya, but human-rights-related issues are raised in bilateral meetings. . The EU has repeatedly made clear its support for the rule of law, including the ICC, and the importance of Kenya, as a State Party to the Rome Statute, cooperating with the Court. On 5 December, however, the ICC prosecutor withdrew the case against President Kenyatta due to lack of evidence. The case against Vice-President Ruto continues. In recent years civil society groups supportive of the ICC proceedings against the President and the Deputy President have faced growing obstacles in their daily work. Overall, the human rights situation in Kenya has not improved during 2014. In some areas limited steps were taken in the right direction, while in others the situation deteriorated. Insecurity remains a serious concern, in particular as regards terrorist acts and high levels of crime. While the government's response is often heavy-handed, with a negative impact on human rights, only limited reforms of the security apparatus have been undertaken. Attempts to limit the space for civil society organisations (CSOs), including a cap on foreign funding and stricter rules on registration, are a risk both for pluralism and the provision of essential services in large parts of the country.

Following the al-Shabaab-attack on the Westgate Mall in Nairobi in September 2013, an EU counter-terrorism package amounting to EUR 19 million was put in place covering Kenya and the Horn of Africa, with the following components: supporting resilience to violence and extremism (EUR 2 million), countering the financing of terrorism and combatting money-laundering (EUR 6 million), and a regional counter-terrorism law enforcement project (EUR 11 million).

The EU is supporting the implementation of the constitution by addressing the issue in the political dialogue, as well as through public diplomacy and financial assistance. Enhancing the accountability of public institutions in the delivery of their constitutional mandate has been agreed with the government of Kenya as a key area of financial cooperation for the period 2014-2020. In particular, in the context of financial support for devolution, the EU launched a pilot project intended to raise awareness on devolved government functions and to provide training for county staff to help them deliver on their core mandates. Furthermore, a new project intended to operationalise devolution was finalised in 2014.

The EU has raised the issue of extra-judicial killings in its dialogue with the government.

Furthermore, the Delegation and Member States have supported CSOs and HRDs working to document instances of extra-judicial killings and to advocate for an end to impunity. Through the EIDHR the EU is funding two projects to a total of EUR 0.85 million. Kenya's human rights record will be reviewed as part of the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) in January 2015.

Lesotho

The EU's main priorities in Lesotho in relation to human rights are the abolition of the death penalty, the promotion of women's and children's rights, and the strengthening of economic and social rights.

Lesotho's governance, rule of law and human rights indicators remain relatively satisfactory by continental and regional standards. The country is perceived as being relatively strong on 'safety and the rule of law' and 'participation and human rights', but much less so on 'sustainable economic opportunity' and 'human development'. However, challenges remain regarding gender equality, women's empowerment and domestic violence. In addition there are concerns about the draft act establishing the long-awaited National Human Rights Commission in terms of the body's neutrality, transparency and ethical values.

In the framework of the 11th World Day against the Death Penalty, the EU Delegation met the Minister for Justice to express the EU's point of view on this matter. Lesotho has had a de facto moratorium on the death penalty since 1996 but there are two cases on death row this year. The Ministry of Justice indicated that the question is sensitive in Lesotho at the moment as the country has seen an increase in brutal murders. In 2014, the EU seconded an expert to the Ministry of Justice on the issue of the death penalty.

In 2014, the EU also discussed the situation of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTI) persons with the Minister for Law and Constitutional Affairs. Even though there is no specific discriminatory legislation on LGBTI persons in Lesotho, sodomy is an offence against the law and morality and is listed as one of the offences in respect of which arrests may be made without a warrant. However, there has been no enforcement of this law to date.

After the alleged attempted coup d'état of August 2014, the Southern African Development Community (SADC) devised a plan to restore peace, security and political stability in Lesotho. The EU has offered to provide support for the SADC observation mission, the upcoming elections and the necessary reform and development agenda.

As regards financial support, through the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights the EU has provided funding to civil society on a number of issues related to women's rights, particularly to prevent trafficking and gender-based violence. The EU budget line on Non-State Actors is also financing a project aimed at mainstreaming gender and justice for local authorities. In addition, through the European Development Fund, the EU is offering support to orphans and vulnerable children in a joint project with the Ministry of Social Development. Other initiatives that are funded by the EU include projects on economic and social rights and on disability.

Liberia

The EU's main priorities for the country are the abolition of the death penalty, increasing awareness of and respect for women's rights and children's rights, and the provision of support to civil society for promoting human rights. Specific objectives include the promotion of access to health and education for women and children, a substantial reduction of all forms of exploitation with a view to their eradication, a substantial reduction of gender violence and maternal mortality, empowerment of women and stronger civil society action on human rights.

The EU organised public debates on the abolition of the death penalty with the participation of the legislature, the Independent National Human Rights Commission, civil society and the media.

Human rights were promoted among young people through musical events.

The EU closely monitors an emerging anti-homosexual movement that proposes legal amendments prohibiting same-sex marriage and homosexual acts. Same-sex relations are banned according to law and in 2013 a new proposed amendment to the criminal code was tabled that would further criminalise same-sex relations as a second degree felony.

Despite remarkable progress since the civil war, Liberia still faces considerable human rights challenges and abuses. While the country's ranking in the Press Freedom Index is comparable to that of last year, there have been cases involving a very strict libel law resulting in self-censorship among members of the press. Liberia still needs to revise its libel laws to meet international standards for freedom of expression and the media. Access to health information also remains a challenge and non-governmental groups, local newspapers, and community radio are playing a key role in public health education.

Liberia is still considered to be a source, transit and destination country for children trafficked for forced labour and sexual exploitation. The government does not fully comply with the minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking. However, despite limited resources, it is making significant efforts to do so. More efforts are needed in the areas of law enforcement and victim protection, while commendable efforts have been made in the area of prevention.

The Ebola crisis has presented additional challenges. Since the beginning of the Ebola crisis, Liberia has imposed quarantines, restricting people's right to liberty and freedom of movement, as well as access to their livelihood, to health care, etc. Women appear to be at greater risk of Ebola than men and UNICEF reported that women across the three most affected countries account for 55 to 60 percent of all deaths. There have been several reports of extortion and excessive use of force by security forces responding to Ebola, particularly during the enforcement of quarantines. During clashes between security forces and angry residents protesting against the quarantine in the West Point neighbourhood of Monrovia, a 15-year-old boy was shot and later died, and four other residents were wounded.

The law signed by President Johnson Sirleaf in 2007 which reintroduced the death penalty, contradictory to obligations under the Second Optional Protocol to the ICCPR, to which Liberia acceded in 2005, is still in force. However, the death penalty was not implemented in 2014.

On 17 September 2014, Belgian police arrested Martina Johnson, a former commander of the rebel National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL). It is the first arrest for crimes that violate international law committed during the conflict in Liberia from 1989 to 1996. The Belgian authorities' arrest of a Liberian for alleged war crimes and crimes against humanity committed during Liberia's first civil war is a major step forward for justice.

Through the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR) the EU continued to support several projects in Liberia. For instance, the EU is financing a project that provides support to the Independent National Human Rights Commission and another aimed at strengthening civil society to deal with reconciliation in the country. The EU is also providing support to civil society organisations working with the most marginalised people in Liberian society. One project specifically focuses on empowering disabled people in Liberia. There are currently three projects in the pipeline on gender equality and women's rights regarding women's participation in decision-making, gender education, gender-based violence and female genital mutilation.

In 2014 a call was launched under the EIDHR to provide financing to civil society projects aimed at implementing the recommendations of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. The organisations selected will begin their work in 2015.

Madagascar

The EU's objectives on human rights and democracy in the framework of its relations with Madagascar concern the promotion of fundamental freedoms directly linked to the political crisis and particularly support for a swift return to constitutional order and the consolidation of political stability. In addition, the EU's priorities include children's rights, respect for human rights in the administration of justice, the promotion of women's rights and the elimination of violence against women, and support for civil society and human rights defenders.

Due to the long-lasting political crisis (2009-2014) and our cooperation being suspended under Article 96 of the Cotonou Agreement until May 2014, the EU objectives and priorities on human rights and democracy have not been the subject of regular dialogue with the authorities.

Following the credible elections in 2013, which were monitored by an EU election observation mission, newly elected institutions (President, National Assembly and government) were in place by April 2014 and the constitutional order was restored. Former HR/VP Ashton issued several positive and supportive statements about the electoral process. As a consequence, in May 2014, the Council of the EU decided to resume development cooperation with Madagascar (which had been suspended in 2010 in the wake of the forcible transfer of power the previous year).

As a general remark on the situation as regards human rights, Madagascar has a good overall legislative framework for the protection of human rights, although certain legal standards are sometimes contradictory. However, the main difficulty is the lack of full implementation of the framework.

Some of the main achievements of Madagascar in 2014 have been adoption of a law on the abolition of the death penalty and the establishment, by law, of an Independent National Commission on Human Rights (*Commission Nationale Indépendante des Droits de l'Homme*). Madagascar has de facto abolished the death penalty as since 1958 no execution has been registered. All capital punishments were systematically commuted to sentences of hard labour for life. Nevertheless, as of 10 December, 65 prisoners remain on death row.

In 2014 Madagascar was suggested as one of the countries in relation to which the EU should undertake a démarche campaign to promote the ratification of the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court and the Agreement on Privileges and Immunities of the Court (APIC) as well as their implementation. On 24 October 2014 such démarches were delivered directly to the Minister for Justice, who reaffirmed a clear determination to finalise the process of implementation. The texts should be presented at the Ordinary Session of the National Assembly in March 2015.

The EU, through its Delegation in Antananarivo, has been working to launch and enhance the activities of a human rights group in the framework of the Technical and Financial Partners (TFP) group. A first meeting was held on 3 September, where it was agreed to continue common and joint advocacy and lobbying to include sufficient allocations for the implementation of the Independent National Commission on Human Rights in the 2015 Finance Act. On human trafficking, another important issue of concern in Madagascar, it was agreed to evaluate the possibility of establishing a dialogue with the countries of destination of migrant workers through the United Nations, in the absence of Malagasy representations in these countries.

As regards financial cooperation, Madagascar benefits from the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR). Nine projects are still under implementation in 2014, with a budget of around EUR 1.8 million. A new allocation for the period 2014-2017, EUR 4 million, has been approved for human rights projects in the country.

Malawi

In 2014, the EU's objectives on human rights and democracy in the framework of its relations with Malawi focused on political rights and democratic governance and rights of persons belonging to minorities.

The EU continued to engage in human rights and democracy discussions with Malawi in various formats including through political dialogue and regular engagement with the Malawi Human Rights Commission. The EU Delegation's Human Rights Defenders working group meets twice a year to discuss key human rights issues and looks to identify ways of working together more effectively.

Another significant development related to human rights where the EU provided support was the 2014 election. The EU provided financial and technical assistance to the Malawi Electoral Commission (MEC) through the UNDP managed basket fund and the Democratic Governance Programme. The EU provided support to civic and voter education throughout the country through the National Initiative of Civic Education and in addition sent an election observation mission headed by a Member of the European Parliament.

In 2014, with EU support, Malawi presented a report on its implementation of the UN International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights to the 111th session of the UN Human Rights Committee. As regards financial cooperation, Malawi benefits from EU support to strengthen human rights observance in the country through capacity-building within the Malawi Human Rights Commission. The EU also provided human rights training to law enforcement officers. The EU continues to support the gender equality agenda through the Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment project in partnership with the UNFPA, in addition to smaller initiatives with local NGOs. The EU also supports a local CSO advocating for LGBTI rights. The issue of children's rights remained an important topic in the public domain and the EU continues to support the strengthening of child protection systems as well as the campaign against child marriages.

Mali

The EU's objectives on human rights and democracy in the framework of its relations with Mali include national reconciliation and security, the rule of law and democracy, justice reform and access to justice, children's rights, women's rights and equality, the fight against corruption, socio-economic rights and basic services. Since last May, vast swathes of the northern regions have no longer been under the control of the government, thus affecting the protection of human rights in these areas.

In its regular political dialogue with the Malian authorities, the EU has repeatedly reiterated its pleas for a more accessible, independent and effective justice system. The Truth, Justice and Reconciliation Commission has still not been made operational, and the government has now postponed this until after the outcome of the Algiers negotiations.

Other significant developments related to human rights on which the EU took a position were the renewed violent tensions in the north of the country. Civilians were the main victims of regular clashes between rebel groups, the army, allied groups, etc.. Frequent cases of abuse of prisoners are reported by observers such as the MINUSMA Human Rights Division.

During 2014, the EU stepped up its dialogue with civil society organisations on transitional justice through a project implemented by the FIDH and the local branch of the *Association Malienne des Droits de l'Homme*. Two projects under the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR) have been identified for 2015-2016 with a total budget of EUR 550 000 (supporting street children and the National Commission for Human Rights). Furthermore, the EU continued providing financial support to Mali through the state-building contract (EU budget support for Mali covering 2013 and 2014).

A major challenge for the government is the fight against impunity. The EU recognised that national reconciliation must be based on a fair and functional judicial system capable of bringing to justice, without distinction, the perpetrators of abuses. The UN Independent Expert on Mali (Mr Suliman Baldo), who visited Mali twice in 2014, reported that some detainees have been liberated because of political considerations and this undermines efforts to fight impunity.

The government launched a reform of the National Commission for Human Rights in order to make it compatible with current international standards.

The EU military mission to contribute to the training of the Malian Armed Forces (EUTM Mali) and the EU civilian mission in Mali (EUCAP Sahel Mali) have included specific human rights modules in their training courses.

Mauritania

The EU's human rights priorities for Mauritania include the improvement of the justice system, the fight against slavery, ethnic minority and gender discrimination, the status of NGOs, the death penalty, the fight against torture and enforced disappearances.

The EU's objectives in 2014 continued to focus on the promotion and defence of human rights, the improvement of governance, respect for the rule of law through dialogue and cooperation with the Mauritanian authorities, and the protection of local human rights defenders and other relevant actors. In 2014 the EU held two official meetings with human rights defenders and one political dialogue session with the government, which covered human rights issues.

Despite legal and institutional progress on human rights protection in Mauritania over the last few years, serious concerns remain in various areas, including a generalised lack of implementation of legislation.

Presidential elections took place in June 2014. Although boycotted by the opposition, the participation rate was high, with President Aziz winning a second and final mandate. The EU sent an expert electoral mission that, in line with other international organisations, concluded that the elections were satisfactory overall and issued a series of recommendations that were shared with the government and the electoral commission.

Following the official visit of the UN Special Rapporteur on Slavery early in the year, the government adopted in March a UN sponsored roadmap with recommendations on eradicating slavery and its remnants. In addition, the government decided to establish a special tribunal to prosecute crimes of slavery in Mauritania, which has not yet been put in place. Its creation is controversial and much criticised by human rights defenders.

The UN International Coordinating Committee for National Human Rights Institutions (ICC) elected the National Commission of Human Rights of Mauritania (CNDH) to represent the African continent for the next two years. As of this year the CNDH is also the national mechanism for prevention of torture in the context of the implementation of the Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture (OPCAT).

The EU has provided support for the drafting of a new law to prevent violence against women and has strongly advocated for better implementation of juvenile justice. Along with the United Nations and international NGOs, the EU Delegation has called on the authorities to seek alternatives to youth imprisonment with adults. The Ministry of Justice responded positively and is currently identifying measures to be taken.

Three new projects funded under the EIDHR started in 2014. They cover key strategy priorities such as prevention of violence against young women employed as servants, economic empowerment of former slaves and support for peaceful coexistence among communities and resolution of land disputes. This particularly sensitive issue is receiving greater attention from both civil society organisations and international partners.

Republic of Mauritius

The EU's objectives on human rights and democracy in the framework of its relations with the Republic of Mauritius are to continue to promote respect for human rights, democracy and the rule of law, with a particular focus on gender-based violence and violence against children.

Throughout 2014 the EU continued to engage in human rights and democracy discussions with the Republic of Mauritius in various formats, including through political dialogue, policy dialogue and development cooperation. There has been no formal political dialogue in Mauritius in 2014.

Based on a ruling by the UN Human Rights Committee in 2012, the constitutional "Declaration of Community (Temporary Provisions) Act" was passed in the National Assembly on 4 July 2014 to allow candidates not to declare their ethnic community when registering as a candidate for the general elections.

The Parliament was dissolved on 6 October 2014 and general legislative elections were organised by a well-functioning Electoral Supervisory Commission on 10 December 2014.

Other significant developments related to human rights in 2014 include the EU's condemnation of gender-based violence in the country. This was done through sponsoring, together with the US embassy, the 16-day campaign "Stop violence! Know your rights" in the framework of the UN initiative "No Violence Against Women" (December 2014) and through a press conference.

The EU issued general statements on International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women, focusing on gender-based violence (GBV).

The EU also continued and stepped up its informal dialogue with civil society organisations by participating in and contributing financially to campaigns to promote the rights of women, with a view to revitalising national-level responses to GBV, as well as raising awareness and initiating public dialogue.

In November 2014, the EU undertook a demarche with the government of the Republic of Mauritius for a vote in favour of the resolution on a moratorium on the use of the death penalty at the 69th UNGA. It should be highlighted that, even though the death penalty is officially suspended by the Abolition of the Death Penalty Act of 1995 (ADPA), the Republic of Mauritius has not ratified the Second Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, which aims at the permanent abolition of the death penalty. Mauritius was also absent during the vote on the UN resolution regarding a global moratorium on executions in December 2010 and December 2012. As regards financial cooperation, the Republic of Mauritius receives funding from the Non-State Actors thematic budget line. Following a call for proposals launched in 2013, the Delegation signed four contracts with NGOs active in the field of children's and women's rights. The following initiatives were funded: rehabilitation and care for 24 abused children deprived of parental care, including children with special needs, and improvement of their quality of life; making primary education physically and pedagogically accessible to children with special needs; contributing to the employability and social integration of hearing impaired children; women's empowerment in Agaléga, a remote outer island of Mauritius.

Mozambique

In 2014, the EU gave priority to the consolidation of the rule of law and democracy through credible and sustainable electoral processes, but also to freedom of expression and association, women's empowerment and children's rights.

The year 2014 was marked by military tensions between the Renamo armed forces and government security forces, mainly in the central provinces, which impacted negatively on the human rights situation. Through political dialogue with both parties, the EU advocated dialogue and abiding by the rule of law as the only possible way out of the political and military tensions. Also, through local EU statements, all stakeholders were called on to take their share of responsibility in the consolidation of peace and reconciliation.

Aiming at the promotion of sustainable, transparent and credible electoral processes in Mozambique, the EU provided support during the 2014 presidential, parliamentary and provincial elections through a multidimensional approach combining continued political dialogue with all the stakeholders, civil society support, prevention of conflict and electoral violence, and election observation. In mid-September, an EU EOM was deployed (with the support of EU Member States) to follow all stages of the electoral process. The mission included a number of Member States' diplomats deployed as short-term observers. The EU EOM presented its preliminary observations two days after the vote and issued successively two press releases on the post-vote situation. The EU also continued advocating for a clearer separation of powers, respect for the rule of law and commitment to the fight against corruption, good governance and access to information. The EU welcomed the approval by Parliament of the law on access to information and the penal code in November 2014, calling for appropriate implementation efforts. It also supported the Public Prosecutor's Office, the Supreme Court and Parliament in the framework of the Rule of Law project (EUR 9 million). Public finance management and accountability has also been at the heart of the EU's development cooperation, through budget support and the corresponding policy dialogue with government.

In 2014, the EU supported a broad range of CSOs working in various fields related to human rights, some of them having been instrumental in their advocacy work on significant reforms such as the penal code, the law on succession and the law on access to information. Support for CSOs also included activities relating to access to information, public accountability and freedom of expression, including support for the Community Radio Forum and the OLAVULA participatory platform for citizens. Support was also provided to the AGIR programme for sustainable governance and a call for proposals was launched under the EU's Non-State Actors and Local Authorities budget line, to promote dialogue between local authorities and participatory citizenship. The EU also enhanced its coordination on gender issues and women's empowerment by creating an EU Gender Group which has been working with the Ministry of Women and Social Affairs on the implementation strategy for women's empowerment. CSOs working in this field received core funding and support to perform awareness-raising activities and to provide support to victims of human rights violations. EU also joined forces with UN Women in the framework of the 16-day UNiTE awareness-raising campaign on violence against women.

In addition, the EU worked with the government and civil society on the protection of children's rights. EU has been working with the government and the ILO on child labour, more specifically on the drafting of a list of hazardous work. The EU has also been funding the establishment of a Child Registration and Vital Statistics system implemented by UNICEF ("Breaking with Broken Systems"). CSOs assisting vulnerable children, raising awareness and working with the authorities were also supported by the EU.

The EU continued to give support to the LGBT community in its advocacy activities on sexual minorities and its lobbying campaign for recognition by the authorities.

Financial support was also given to the National Human Rights Commission, which had been facing administrative obstacles.

To mark Human Rights Day, the EU organised a consultation with human rights defenders from civil society to discuss human rights priorities in Mozambique, ahead of the preparation of a new EU human rights country strategy and an EIDHR call for proposals in 2015.

Namibia

The EU's objectives on human rights and democracy in the framework of its relations with the Republic of Namibia focus on the consolidation of democratic processes, institutions and political participation and pluralism, in particular through improved functioning of state institutions such as Parliament and better access to justice.

The EU also engages with Namibia on the promotion of economic, social and cultural rights. Although Namibia has a very advanced legal framework on this matter, much of the legislation remains largely unimplemented due to the government's lack of capacity. In addition, the EU supports and promotes the rights of persons belonging to minorities, such as indigenous populations (e.g. the San), people with disabilities and lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people, who are often excluded from society, lack a political voice and have limited access to basic services.

The EU is engaged in a dialogue on human rights and democracy with the Republic of Namibia.

This includes meetings with NGOs and an EU/Member States human rights working group.

As the government of Namibia endorsed the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) and ratified other conventions in relation to indigenous peoples, the EU inquired about the government's plans to address the marginalisation of indigenous peoples and improve their living conditions. The EU has followed the status of the country's ICC

Implementation Bill and encouraged the government to pass this legislation in order to be in a position to cooperate fully with the ICC. Gender and women's rights were also addressed, the EU noting with concern a rising level of gender-based violence in society. Apart from the corresponding legal framework changes, the EU also followed closely the court case regarding the forced sterilisation of HIV-positive women.

The EU and its Member States continue to partner the line ministries and NGOs in the implementation of the National Gender Policy. The government was encouraged to approve swiftly the Child Care and Protection Bill and the EU confirmed its commitment to supporting civil society through management of grants to civil society organisations. Key human rights issues were raised through démarches, mostly on UN-related issues, particularly in preparation for UNGA Third Committee and Human Rights Council sessions. Finally, the EU congratulated Namibia on its election to the Human Rights Council (2014-2016).

On the occasion of the 28 November 2014 elections, diplomatic personnel from the EU Member States' missions present in Namibia and from the EU Delegation operated a joint diplomatic watch exercise in and around the capital that confirmed the calm and disciplined atmosphere on election day. The Delegation then issued an EU local statement congratulating Namibia on its democratic convictions and its respect for constitutional presidential term limits, and expressing the wish to work with the new government with the aim of supporting Namibia's social, economic and democratic development.

The EU stepped up its dialogue with civil society organisations by drafting the EU country roadmap for engagement with civil society (2014-2017), through a consultation process led by the EU Delegation and involving EU Member States and civil society organisations (CSOs). The priorities of the roadmap are: to enhance efforts to promote a better environment for CSOs in partner countries, to promote structured participation of CSOs in domestic policies, in the EU programming cycle and in international processes, and to increase CSOs' capacity.

Namibia underwent its Universal Periodic Review (UPR) on 31 January 2011. The mid-term progress report in 2013 tackled some pending issues again, with strong references to gender issues, protection of children's rights, and marginalisation of indigenous peoples. UPR recommendations include guaranteeing that trials take place within a reasonable period of time, and that special measures are taken to address the backlog of criminal cases. The EU has promoted the implementation of UPR recommendations in a number of areas and has also provided technical assistance for the drafting of the Human Rights Action Plan, which was presented by the President on 9 December 2014.

Namibia benefits from the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR). A call for proposals, with a budget of EUR 600 000, was published on 18 January 2013. The aim was to help civil society in Namibia to develop greater cohesion in working on human rights, political pluralism, democratic political participation and representation. Selected projects focus on access to justice, elections and voter education. The EU continued to provide financial support through the EU thematic programme Non-State Actors and Local Authorities, focussing on gender-based violence, children's rights, marginalised people, including those with HIV/AIDS, and interaction between civil society and regional/local government.

Moreover, under the European Development Fund the EU has provided EUR 4 million to the Namibia Civil Society Support Programme to improve its policy advocacy and coordination role and to strengthen CSOs' capacity for governance and accountability, as well as to support the establishment of the Civil Society Foundation of Namibia (CSFN). Within this project, there is an allocation of EUR 1 million for CSFN to organise calls for proposals to disburse small and micro grants to community-based organisations (CBOs).

Niger

The EU's human rights priorities in Niger include the respect for democratic principles and the rule of law, enhancement of the justice system, especially access to justice and detention conditions, and protection of women's and children's rights. These priorities are implemented through specific roadmaps and objectives such as the gender action plan (2010-2014) and the roadmap for engagement with civil society, in collaboration with Member States and Nigerien authorities.

An analysis of the human rights situation in the country shows that, despite a form of harassment strategy deployed by local authorities against the opposition, democratic principles and essential freedoms, especially political and individual ones, are not seriously threatened. The EU supports Niger in its efforts to improve the human rights situation, in particular the rights of women and girls. The security situation at the borders remains very worrying. Niger has intensified its security response while ensuring the protection of democratic principles and fundamental rights. The authorities' collaboration with the EU is satisfactory.

During the political dialogue meetings held in April and October 2014, the EU underlined the importance of appropriate preparation for the next general elections, due to take place in the first half of 2016.

In November 2014 the EU Delegation launched a new call for proposals under the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR), the thematic priorities of which put special emphasis on detention conditions and the promotion of women's and children's socio-economic and cultural rights. In 2014, projects funded under the EIDHR have, among other things, assisted numerous street children in the regions of Maradi and Zinder by providing emergency accommodation and helping them develop skills for jobs and their return home. In addition, support was given to six community schools devoted to the education of children, girls in particular, marginalised for generations because they are descendants of slaves.

Through its Justice and Rule of Law Support Programme (PAJED II), the EU continued to support, technically and financially, the implementation of experimental alternatives to imprisonment and the drafting of a national policy for judicial protection of minors. This programme has also supported the establishment of a national agency providing legal and judicial assistance, which is already operational and able to facilitate access to justice for the most vulnerable population groups. The Civil Society Support Programme (PASOC II) has financed civil society organisations' initiatives aimed at reinforcing their role as key development actors, resulting in 244 micro-projects implemented by local NGOs and grassroots associations. Thirty-three percent of these projects are aimed at promoting gender equality and women's rights.

Support for the implementation of a programme on development of the national statistical system for the promotion of good governance (PASTAGEP) has financed awareness campaigns in the regions on the importance of registering civil state events.

Nigeria

The EU's main objectives on human rights and democracy in the framework of its relations with Nigeria are the fight against torture, extra-judicial killings, the death penalty, reform of the security and justice sectors, the fight against impunity, promotion of social and economic rights and the fight against all forms of discrimination.

The EU continued to engage in discussions on human rights and democracy issues in several political dialogue sessions under Article 8 of the Cotonou Agreement and during the EU-Nigeria Ministerial Dialogue held on 27 November in Abuja. National elections, human rights and the Boko Haram insurgency in the north-east were the three principal bilateral subjects discussed at the Ministerial Dialogue, at the end of which a joint communiqué was signed.

A civil society consultation took place in Abuja on 6 March, followed by a human rights defenders workshop on 27 March. Several meetings were held with the National Human Rights Commission. Alleged human rights abuses by the Nigerian security services in the framework of counter-terrorism operations were addressed with the Nigerian National Security Advisor. A conflict analysis workshop was held in Abuja in October. On International Human Rights Day (10 December 2014) the Deputy Head of the EU Delegation to Nigeria addressed the public at an official event organised by the National Human Rights Council. The EU also recorded a radio message on human rights.

In its conclusions of 12 May, the EU Foreign Affairs Council expressed its deep concern about the ongoing terrorist attacks in Nigeria. Several statements were issued on the numerous atrocities carried out by Boko Haram, including on the abduction of over 250 schoolgirls in Chibok in April. The EU also reacted with a statement to the adoption of the law criminalising same-sex marriage in January. Informal and formal démarches were organised to reach out to the appropriate Nigerian authorities. Nigeria was tabled three times for the human rights urgency debate in the plenary sessions of the European Parliament (January, March, July) and European Parliament resolutions were issued each time.

A follow-up mission to the 2011 election observation mission (EOM) took place in May to assist Nigeria with the implementation of the 2011 recommendations ahead of the March 2015 elections. The second Universal Periodic Review was concluded in early 2014, with Nigeria accepting 175 out of 219 recommendations, including those related to torture and extra-judicial killings by members of the security forces. Nigeria only rejected 10 recommendations, all related to discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation, and put on hold 34 related to the moratorium on the death penalty, which has constitutional implications.

Through the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR) the EU continued to support several projects in Nigeria. Under the Instrument contributing to Stability and Peace, the EU supports Nigerian efforts to combat terrorism and to build peace in different conflict areas. The European Development Fund contributes to the ongoing reform of the justice sector, supports the 2012-2015 electoral cycle, promotes women's engagement in peace and security and offers psychosocial support to children affected by conflict in northern Nigeria. The 11th EDF will have a special focus on the north, to help improve the dire socio-economic situation for the people in these parts of the country.

Rwanda

The EU aims mainly to support Rwanda in monitoring and achieving the commitments to implement the UPR recommendations, in particular regarding political space, freedom of expression and assembly, and the independence of the judiciary and the media.

In 2014 the EU continued to engage in human rights and democracy discussions with Rwanda within the framework of the political dialogue (Article 8 of the Cotonou Agreement and meetings at ministerial level). During the year, the EU also continued to meet with civil society organisations, including on human rights issues.

The EU Special Representative for Human Rights, Stavros Lambrinidis, visited Rwanda in April 2014 to commemorate the 20th anniversary of the start of the genocide in Rwanda. The then EU Commissioner for Development, Andris Piebalgs, visited Rwanda in March 2014 and met with civil society organisations. The UN Special Rapporteur on the Rights to Freedom of Peaceful Assembly and of Association, Maina Kiai, conducted official visits to Rwanda in January and August 2014 at the invitation of Rwanda.

In its conclusions of 22 July 2014, the EU Foreign Affairs Council noted with concern the constraints faced by political parties and civil society in Rwanda. It encouraged Rwanda to further open up political space and to allow greater freedom of expression for fuller democratic participation.

Rwanda made progress in 2014 in implementing recommendations from the first cycle of the Universal Periodic Review in 2011 (the next one will be in 2015). These include the approval of a national legal aid policy and a policy on justice for children in October 2014; ratification of the additional protocols to the Convention Against Torture and to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women; and preparatory work to define a national human rights action plan, including consulting with external stakeholders.

Under the European Development Fund, one of the focal areas for the EU is accountable governance, which includes specific objectives on strengthening public accountability and supporting civil society, aligned with the Rwandan Economic Development and Poverty Reduction Strategy 2013-2017.

In February 2014 civil society organisations expressed their concern over the Prime Minister's instructions on the Joint Action Development Forum, as adopted in October 2013, fearing a threat to NGOs' independence.

Rwandan organisations are supported financially by the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR). Projects included: trade unions' compliance with the UN Human Rights Council's Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights; prevention of conflicts resulting from land disputes and strengthening of local-level mediators; children's rights and early childhood and care development; reconciliation, rehabilitation and access to basic services for vulnerable groups including orphans, marginalised groups, torture victims and women victims of violence; and domestic observation during election processes, including support for the creation of a civil society electoral support network for long-term engagement.

Furthermore, the EU provided financial support to Rwanda through its budget support programme for the justice sector through an agreement with Belgium to support the implementation of the new Justice, Reconciliation, Law and Order Sector Strategy 2014-2018. This includes a voice and accountability component focussing on monitoring delivery of justice, access to justice and to land for the most vulnerable, GBV prevention, and promotion of human rights with a focus on labour rights.

Within the framework of the EU civil society roadmap exercise and preparations for the 11th EDF programming exercise, mapping of civil society in Rwanda, mainly focussed on democratic governance, was conducted by the EU.

The EU carried out a field visit to Lake Rweru (on the border between Rwanda and Burundi) in September 2014 in connection with unidentified bodies recovered from the lake. The visit conveyed EU concern and underlined the need for transparent and effective investigations.

São Tomé and Príncipe

The main EU priorities remained the ratification of core international human rights treaties, support measures for the judicial system, the abolition of ill-treatment by police forces, the encouragement of efforts to fight corruption, and raising awareness of the need to combat discrimination.

The EU continued to engage in human rights and democracy discussions with São Tomé and Príncipe in the framework of the regular political dialogue under Article 8 of the Cotonou Agreement. The dialogue takes place annually, and was held in February 2014. The main issues touched upon were judicial system reform, the ratification of the Rome Statute by São Tomé and Príncipe and preparations for elections.

On the occasion of the legislative, regional and local elections that took place in October 2014, the EU issued a statement congratulating São Tomé and Príncipe on the peaceful conduct of the vote, and welcoming the high electoral turnout across the country. The EU also contributed financially with EUR 151 979 to assist the electoral process in São Tomé and Príncipe through training activities and support for polling stations.

As regards financial cooperation, the country benefits from the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR). Nevertheless, no call for proposals was launched in 2014 for the Country-Based Support Scheme. However, a call will be launched in 2015 with an allocation of EUR 150 000. Some preliminary activities have been carried out in order to prepare the 2015 call for proposals.

São Tomé and Príncipe has benefited from the EU's Non-State Actors and Local Authorities in Development thematic budget line, with an amount of EUR 1.7 million allocated for building capacity and helping to restructure non-state actors and civil society organisations in São Tomé and Príncipe.

Senegal

In 2014, through the political dialogue under Article 8 of the Cotonou Agreement and EU cooperation with Senegal, the EU and its Member States focused on priorities such as women's and children's rights, the fight against impunity, de-clogging of the judiciary and reducing the duration and number of cases of pre-trial detention, and non-discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation.

Senegal's record on human rights is in general positive. Nevertheless, despite progress on gender equality and good intentions to combat corruption and injustice, the authorities still need to make progress on child protection, the fight against impunity, reducing pre-trial detentions and preventing discrimination against homosexuals.

On several occasions when talking to the media, the various EU Ambassadors, including the EU Head of Mission, mentioned the EU's common strategy, values and concerns regarding human rights. Systematic cooperation between the EU and its Member States in this area has been established, with a division of labour between Member States.

The EU continued to acknowledge the existence of Senegalese laws that protect women and children but also stressed the importance of specific implementing actions, which often lag behind. In particular, the precarious situation of street children was emphasised at the Article 8 political dialogue meeting in June and a dedicated human rights session with the Minister for Justice in November. The EU stressed the importance of budget allocation and implementation for the national strategy for the protection of children (adopted in December 2013). On the occasion of International Human Rights Day on 10 December the EU Delegation will organise an event around the theme of the right to education and young people's, in particular young women's, integration into the world of work.

In 2014 the EU continued to provide financial support under the Non-State Actors thematic line to promote gender equality in access to political, economic and social rights through a project aimed at fighting sexual abuse and ill-treatment of girls (EUR 99 980). Furthermore, the EU asked for EIDHR funding to support NGOs that work in the area of children's rights. The EU also worked on a call for proposals under the Instrument contributing to Stability and Peace (IcSP) to address the role of women in crisis situations as well as the prevention of exploitation of children.

In the framework of the political dialogue between the EU and Senegal, a specific session with the Minister for Justice in November was devoted to human rights and the EU and its Member States stressed the need for a reduction in the number of cases and the duration of pre-trial detention. Via the European Development Fund programme that supports the reform of the justice sector, the EU is helping to improve both the 'hardware' (courts, prisons) and the 'software' (training, awareness, fighting impunity) of the rule of law in Senegal, with a budget of EUR 7.9 million. The EU is also financing capacity-building at the Senegalese Court of Auditors to help the Court to reduce its backlogs in judging the use of public funds and increase its efficiency.

The EU and several EU Member States provided grants to support the Senegalese authorities in the organisation of the trial of Hissène Habré, the former president of Chad who is accused of crimes against humanity, by the *Chambres africaines extraordinaires* based in Senegal. The Minister for Justice assured the EU that the instruction phase would be closed at the end of January 2015 and that the trial could start in April.

The criminalisation of homosexuality is systematically brought up as an issue in the political dialogue, where the EU highlights non-compliance with international treaties that were signed by Senegal. The Senegalese Minister for Justice encourages prosecutors not to apply Article 319 of the Penal Code, which criminalises 'unnatural acts'.

In the area of freedom of expression and association, which in general is not controversial in Senegal, the EU has supported and protected human rights defenders, and contributed to the clarification of civil society's legal and financial framework, to the decriminalisation of press offences and to quality journalism. Support via the EU's new Civil Society and Local Authorities budget line was requested for 2014. In May the EU financed the second 'University for Non-State Actors'.

Republic of Seychelles

The EU's objectives on human rights and democracy in the framework of its relations with the Republic of Seychelles are to consolidate the electoral reform process, follow up on the implementation of the recommendations formulated during the Universal Periodic Review of Seychelles undertaken in May 2011, and support the domestication of international conventions and treaties.

The EU continued to engage in human rights and democracy discussions with Seychelles in various formats, including close follow-up on the electoral reform process with specific attention to the review of the 2013 Public Order Act.

Furthermore, in its regular dialogue with the Seychelles authorities, the EU has repeatedly reiterated its pleas for improvement of the democratic environment, with a focus on accelerating the electoral reform process and amending legal provisions for enhanced freedom of assembly, freedom of expression and freedom of the press, non-discrimination against women and protection of the rights of children.

Following presidential elections that took place in May 2011, the EU encouraged the Seychelles authorities to implement the recommendations for electoral reforms formulated by the international election observation mission comprising the Commonwealth, the International Organisation for the French-Speaking World, the Southern African Development Community (SADC) and the Indian Ocean Commission (IOC).

No political dialogue under Article 8 of the Cotonou Agreement took place in 2014. The Delegation has now suggested holding such a dialogue during the first quarter of 2015.

During the year, the EU continued its dialogue with civil society organisations to follow up on developments in relation to the review of the 2013 Public Order Act.

Sierra Leone

The EU human rights objectives in Sierra Leone include the abolition of the death penalty, gender equality, women's empowerment, enforcement of legislation against child labour and exploitation, reduction of poverty, and improved access to justice, health and education. The rights of those affected by large-scale land leasing and extractive industries also needed continued attention. In general, remarkable progress had been achieved since the end of the civil war but considerable human rights challenges and abuses persisted. The EU raised human rights issues with the government in the context of Sierra Leone's membership of the Human Rights Council, and continued to support projects aimed at promoting fundamental rights in the country.

Human rights, combined with specific measures to support gender equality and education as an important contribution to poverty reduction, are part of the national agenda for prosperity (2013-2018) launched by the government in July 2013, and supported by the EU. The EU also supports the constitutional review process, which aims to align the Constitution to the international human rights norms, and the law on Freedom of Information, which was adopted in October to guarantee access to information from state bodies.

In 2014 EU-funded projects focused mainly on the rights of persons with disabilities (capacity-building and mental health), gender (e.g. empowerment and combating gender-based violence, including female genital mutilation) and children's rights (child labour). Support was also given to strengthening access to justice, including training for legal and para-legal practitioners, and to promoting freedom of information and better health services. The Sierra Leone Human Rights Commission also received financial support from the EU. More specifically, funding was awarded for the implementation of a project entitled 'A National Conversation on Human Rights, Governance and Democracy', which aimed to mainstream specific human rights issues through the empowerment and strengthening of the country's media and civil society.

In 2014 a call for proposals was launched under the EIDHR to provide financing to civil society projects aimed at implementing the recommendations of Sierra Leone's Truth and Reconciliation Commission. Those organisations selected will begin their work in 2015.

Somalia

The EU's engagement with Somalia is guided by the Somali Compact, which was adopted in 2013 and which reflects the ongoing process of the country's transition and defines policy interventions to ensure that it stays on the path to long-term-peace and state-building. The EU's priorities in the country in terms of human rights are to protect civilians and children in armed conflict and to ensure humanitarian access. Support for the Federal Constitution is also at the core of the EU's work in Somalia. The remaining priorities concern the promotion and protection of women's rights and of the LGBTI community, as well as the abolition of the death penalty.

The situation in Somalia on the human rights front remains challenging. In 2014, large-scale human rights violations continued in Somalia, including extrajudicial killings, violence against women and children, recruitment and use of children as armed soldiers, and attacks against journalists. Other major human rights issues included cases of arbitrary detention, limited access to justice, and enforcement of the death penalty. In addition, impunity for these crimes remains a serious problem often due to poor justice system and rule of law institutions. Many of these violations were related to the ongoing conflict between the coalition of forces supported by the Federal Government of Somalia and al-Shabaab insurgents. Hundreds of thousands remained displaced in Somalia, with around one million Somali refugees in the neighbouring countries.

During 2014, the EU frequently discussed human rights issues with the Somali Government in the context of Article 8 political dialogue. In different meetings the EU emphasised its human rights priorities in the country and called on the Somali Government to take action to improve the situation in line with the Compact and its international commitments.

In practical terms, in 2014 the EU supported the government's efforts to build human rights-sensitive institutional structures and legislation by promoting the inclusion of human rights as a cross-cutting issue in various guiding strategy documents and action plans of the new government (e.g. the justice and corrections 2014-2016 implementation plan, the Human Rights Bill to establish the independent HR Commission, the National Gender Policy, and the National Action Plan on ending sexual violence in armed conflict, which includes developing a Sexual Offence Bill).

Dialogue with Somali human rights defenders as well as with government representatives in Mogadishu was challenging due to the weak security situation in the capital. The work of the federal government was greatly hampered in the last quarter of the year due to an internal political crisis.

The EU expressed public concern about the continuous violations of human rights and international humanitarian law through its statements both at HR/VP and at local level as well as through the Council Conclusions on Somalia (October 2014). SGBV and women's rights were also frequently raised in discussions with both the authorities and civil society representatives. Following the release of the Human Rights Watch report on sexual abuse allegedly committed by AMISOM peacekeepers in Somalia, the EU called on the African Union (AU) to investigate these allegations. The UNDP's Rule of Law & Security (ROLS) programme not only expanded the presence of the rule of law into new areas, but also supported the drafting of human rights-sensitive police and justice strategies, which provide the guiding principles for all police and justice development in Somalia. As a key donor of the ROLS programme, the EU insisted that the principles of civilian oversight, adequate vetting and human rights-sensitive training of new recruits, as well as addressing impunity, remain key cornerstones in all security sector development. The 'access to justice' and 'civilian police' components aim to build the capacity of the justice sector to serve Somali citizens, and in particular the most vulnerable groups, and to ensure access to inclusive, equitable and accountable forms of security and protection for all Somalis. Special training on SGBV is also provided.

Human rights law and international humanitarian law are part of the training delivered by the EU Training Mission (EUTM Somalia) to Somali soldiers in both Uganda and Mogadishu. Matters related to the protection of civilians are reflected in EUTM's advisory, mentoring and training activities. This training will be continued in 2015 as part of wider security sector reform efforts. EUTM will continue to provide training, mentoring and advice in human rights, international humanitarian and penal law, gender perspectives and issues related to women, peace and security and protection of civilians, and the mainstreaming of these aspects across the three pillars of the mission in cooperation with other partners, especially the UN and AMISOM.

The Copenhagen High Level Partnership forum (19-20 November) welcomed the development of legal and policy frameworks to promote human rights, protect the most vulnerable groups - women and children in conflict - and ensure women's and children's rights. The international community also encouraged the federal government to swiftly establish the Independent Human Rights Commission.

Throughout 2014, the EU Delegation to Somalia acted as the Secretariat of the Human Rights Working Group (HRWG), which constitutes the key mechanism for donors to monitor the human rights situation in Somalia, and to maintain constructive dialogue on human rights issues with the relevant Somali authorities and civil society. The HRWG consists of the EU Delegation to Somalia, EU Member States, Norway, Switzerland and the USA. The HRWG held two meetings in Somalia in 2014. In that year, the group was co-chaired by Belgium, Spain (until June) and Sweden (from August). It followed the developments on SGBV and media freedom; the legislative frameworks and development strategies relevant for human rights, such as the drafting and revision of the National Human Rights Commission bill and the various national and regional media bills; the constitutional process; and the different security sector strategy development processes.

South Africa

The values of human rights and democracy are enshrined in the EU-South Africa relationship by the Trade, Development and Cooperation Agreement of 1999 and the Strategic Partnership adopted in 2007.

The second EU-South Africa Structured Dialogue Forum on Human Rights was held in Brussels on 28 November 2014. It was co-chaired on the EU side by the EU Special Representative for Human Rights Stavros Lambrinidis and EEAS Managing Director Mara Marinaki. Jerry Matjila, Director-General of the Foreign Ministry co-chaired on the South African side. Though it was formalised only in 2013, the dialogue was able to build on the regular in-depth consultations held since 2009 and on consultations with civil society organisations engaged in the protection of human rights in Europe and South Africa.

This second session was an opportunity for the EU and South Africa to discuss issues of common interest and mutual concern, including cooperation in multilateral fora and domestic issues. Multilateral topics included racism and xenophobia, business and human rights, the right to development, economic and social rights, and the post-2015 development framework. The issues of private, military and security companies, as well as the International Criminal Court, also featured on the agenda. The EU and South Africa also discussed domestic topics such as racism and xenophobia and policing and human rights. Both parties agreed to strengthen their cooperation on most of the items discussed and to make additional efforts to reach a common understanding on sensitive issues.

In addition to the human rights dialogue, a civil society seminar was organised on 27 November. Around 20 organisations from the EU and South Africa discussed topics such as human rights and accountability of state services, human rights and access to services as well as the wide range of topics covered in the framework of the human rights dialogue. Participants drafted recommendations that were raised during the human rights dialogue's launch.

Throughout the year, the EU continued to monitor developments and actively engage with South Africa in the field of human rights, with a focus on the full range of human rights issues under discussion in multilateral fora, notably the Human Rights Council and the UNGA Fifth Committee, and including LGBTI issues and broad engagement with civil society organisations.

EU development cooperation continued to support human rights, mainly by assisting civil society organisations in areas such as disability, migration, children's and women's rights and gender-based violence, benefiting from thematic budget lines and the EIDHR. The EUR 25 million Socio-Economic Justice for All (SEJA) Programme was signed by the European Commission and the South African Government in 2014. SEJA aims to support the government's policy on socio-economic justice as set out in the South African Constitution and supported by a strategic framework drawn up by the Department of Justice and Constitutional Development. SEJA will support stakeholders from both government and civil society and promote collaborative relationships between them.

South Sudan

The events of 15 December 2013 and beyond, which precipitated South Sudan into armed conflict only two and a half years after independence, have drastically changed the prospects for the newest country in the world. The civil war has resulted in the deaths of at least ten thousand people, the displacement of two million people and appalling violations of international humanitarian law and human rights.

While for months the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) in Eastern Africa pushed for inclusive and comprehensive peace talks, the government and the opposition failed to engage in the process in good faith or fully honour their commitments. With the rainy season soon to end, there were growing fears that the warring parties were preparing for new major offensives. The absence of progress in the peace talks was accompanied by a narrowing of the political space. NGOs and media outlets were increasingly harassed and restrictive legislation was put forward by the government to limit their ability to operate freely.

In this context, the EU's main objectives in 2014 were to avoid a regional spill-over, bring an immediate end to the fighting and expedite the peace talks. The EU engaged and pursued a comprehensive strategy to support the restoration of peace in South Sudan, which includes: providing political and financial support to the IGAD-led process and the mechanism to monitor compliance with the cessation of hostilities; imposing sanctions against military leaders who are spoilers to the peace process and have committed human rights violations; strengthening and refocusing the United Nations Mission in the Republic of South Sudan's (UNMISS) mandate to prioritise the protection of civilians and human rights reporting; supporting accountability and reconciliation through the AU Commission of Inquiry and actions by the UN Human Rights Council; and adopting a stabilisation package while increasing humanitarian assistance.

Through several statements and Council Conclusions, the EU condemned the human rights violations in the strongest terms and called for those responsible for gross violations to be held accountable. The EU supported the recommendations of the UNMISS report and urged the government to follow through with its implementation. Finally, the EU, in close cooperation with the international community, was also very active in preventing the adoption of restrictive laws in South Sudan that would limit the ability of civil society to operate in the country. In addition the EU continues to be committed to respond to the increased conflict-related needs.

Under the EIDHR, the EU reconfirmed its commitment to the creation of an enabling environment for human rights defenders by allocating specific funding to the establishment of a human rights defenders network. Its objective will be to increase the quantity and enhance the quality of human rights work in South Sudan by improving the safety and security of local human rights defenders.

Sudan

In 2014, Sudan's internal conflicts in Darfur, Southern Kordofan and Blue Nile continued, implying serious violations of human rights and international humanitarian law such as indiscriminate aerial bombardments, scorched earth tactics, large-scale displacements, widespread violence against women and children and denial of humanitarian access, all committed by state actors, non-state actors (in particular the "Rapid Support Forces" militia), and rebel forces. The situation was compounded by a general lack of accountability and widespread impunity. In spite of the announcement of a national dialogue by the President early in 2014, political space remained heavily restricted by continued arbitrary arrests of political activists and closure of NGOs. The targeting of individuals because of their ethnic affiliation continued in many parts of the country. Political opponents, youth groups, human rights activists and journalists remained at high risk of harassment, arbitrary arrest and ill-treatment by the National Intelligence and Security Services (NISS) due to their political affiliation. State censorship and control over the media, in particular newspapers, remained high, including seizures of entire print runs and closure of newspapers.

The respect for human rights is an integral part of EU engagement with Sudan and seen as a key factor for the country's long-term stability. The EU continued to co-chair the International Partners Forum for Human Rights together with Canada and held several meetings with national human rights institutions, government counterparts and civil society. In some instances, the EU also monitored human rights-related trials.

The case of Meriam Ibrahim, a Christian woman who was sentenced to death for the alleged crime of apostasy, made the headlines in May 2014 and triggered international calls for her release and guarantees of the freedom of religion and belief, including through a joint statement of the Presidents of the European Commission, the Council of the EU and the European Parliament together with religious leaders. Other statements by the EU in 2014 addressed the aerial bombardments of civilian facilities in South Kordofan, the escalation of violence in Darfur, visits by President Bashir to State Parties to the Rome Statute, the detention of political activists and opposition leaders, and reports of sexual violence in Darfur.

The EU also repeatedly spoke out in favour of an inclusive and comprehensive national dialogue, including through conclusions issued by the EU Foreign Affairs Council in October. Messages on the national dialogue, humanitarian access and the general human rights situation were reinforced by a visit to Sudan by a delegation of the European Parliament in March.

The UN Human Rights Council in Geneva discussed Sudan at its 27th session in September 2014 and agreed to extend and strengthen the mandate for the independent expert under Item 10 (Technical assistance and capacity building) – something for which the EU lobbied strongly.

Following the resignation of the last post holder, Mr Aristide Nononsi (Benin) was appointed as the new Independent Expert.

In 2014, Sudan was an active participant in the preparation of the EU-Horn of Africa Migration Route Initiative, now called the Khartoum Process which focuses on human trafficking and people smuggling. Sudan hosted an AU regional conference and senior officials meeting in October and is one of the core countries and a member of the steering committee agreed in November during the ministerial conference in Rome.

EU relations with Sudan continue to be affected by the outstanding ICC arrest warrant against President Bashir, and by the decision of Sudan to not ratify the revised Cotonou Agreement. Development funding that was still provided through re-committed funds and a special allocation based on a 2010 Council Decision to address the needs of the most vulnerable populations in conflict-affected areas came to an end in 2013, even though projects were still ongoing. In addition, human rights-related funding was channelled through the EIDHR (EUR 1 million in 2014), the Non-State Actors and Local Authorities in Development Programme (EUR 2.5 million), the Food Security Thematic Programme (EUR 10 million in 2014), the Instrument contributing to Peace and Stability (EUR 13.5 million for 2014-2017). Key areas of project support included promotion of an enabling environment, capacity building for local NGOs, civil society and human rights defenders, and promotion of the rights of persons belonging to the most marginalised and vulnerable groups, including women and children, people with disabilities, indigenous and other minorities.

Swaziland

The general EU objectives on human rights and democracy in the framework of its relations with Swaziland are to support democracy and good governance, to promote gender equality and to encourage the de jure abolition of the death penalty. Other important priorities include the strengthening of the Commission on Human Rights and Public Administration, promoting freedom of expression, assembly and association, and supporting the fight against corruption.

In 2014 the EU continued to engage on human rights and democracy with the Swaziland authorities in the context of different meetings. For instance, in October, the annual political dialogue took place between the two parties and covered a number of human rights issues including the death penalty and gender equality.

Throughout the year the EU Ambassador also had meetings with the King, the Prime Minister and members of the Cabinet. The meetings provided an opportunity to share with them the EU's commitment to the promotion of human rights and to express its serious concern for what appears to be a deterioration in the protection of fundamental rights in the country.

Following the arrest of Mr Thulani Maseko, a prominent human rights lawyer and of Mr Bheki Makhubu, senior editor of the Nation Magazine, for criticising the high court, the EU issued a public statement in March 2014 expressing concern over the arrest and its negative effect on the freedom of expression and media in the country. In addition, the EU delivered another statement in June 2014 following the arrests of political activists.

In line with the Cotonou Agreement, the EU supports the full involvement of civil society in the development agenda in Swaziland. Presently, the EU is implementing a non-state actors programme, through centralised management, amounting to EUR 4.5 million. Civil society in Swaziland also receives support from the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR) amounting to EUR 1 million.

Tanzania

Promoting non-discrimination, fighting gender-based violence and advocating for strengthened social and economic rights continued to frame the EU's human rights agenda in Tanzania. On the political front, the EU followed the constitutional review process, the evolution of media freedom and the functioning of public oversight bodies with keen interest. Sporadic religious and political incidents during the first half of 2014 continued to cause concern.

The political dialogue between the EU and Tanzania in March 2014, under Article 8 of the Cotonou Agreement, addressed the challenges of law enforcement, the electoral environment and related issues concerning freedom of expression and of the press, and gender-based violence. The EU expressed support for the announced legal reforms and modernisation in these areas. The EU's policy dialogue on general budget support also served as a platform to monitor human rights.

Gender-based violence is widespread in Tanzania and often remains unchallenged. Early and often forced marriages and related harmful traditional practices, such as female genital mutilation (FGM), are culturally embedded in many parts of the country. Poverty, particularly in rural areas, is an exacerbating factor, with dowry payment being a significant driver of child marriage. As a favourable development, the draft Constitution proposed a definition of child as one below 18 years of age, which is expected to induce a corresponding reform of the Marriage Act setting the legal age of marriage. The EU strongly advocated for this and also for a legal ban on dowry. Moreover, quality and gender-equitable education – the most efficient alternative to child marriage – was an important indicator for triggering EU general budget support to Tanzania.

The EU's portfolio of projects included nationwide as well as community-based activities to counter, prevent and respond to violence against children, child labour, trafficking and other harmful practices, such as FGM or child marriage, that involve sexual and gender-based violence. The EU contributed to public diplomacy campaigns and to the establishment of specialised police desks, in an effort to influence people's perceptions of and reactions to these harmful phenomena. The EU also promoted women's participation and empowerment in the electoral process, and women's access to land, agricultural activities and better nutrition.

Following a number of fatal attacks against people living with albinism, the EU addressed an open letter to the Prime Minister, asking the government to end impunity of witchcraft and bring the perpetrators to justice. The EU also sought to generate public debate around the issue by an article that raised "10 Questions on the Rights of People Living with Albinism to Live Safely in Tanzania". EU funding was provided for community-based activities to promote the rights of the elderly and to curb "witchcraft killings".

On the occasion of the International Day of Democracy the EU met with the media to discuss freedom of information and democracy. The EU also sponsored a workshop with stakeholders organised by the Commission on Human Rights and Good Governance on the International Day of Human Rights to take stock of the Universal Periodic Review recommendations in view of preparations for the next cycle.

In October 2014 Tanzania started conferring citizenship certificates to 162 000 former Burundian refugees, who had resided in Tanzania since 1972, following their initial naturalisation in 2010. The EU had repeatedly raised this matter with Tanzania and commended the decision as a demonstration of Tanzania's commitment to peace and stability in the African Great Lakes region.

Togo

The EU's work with Togo in the field of human rights ranged from a regular dialogue with the different actors (authorities, leaders and civil society organisations) to technical and financial assistance, as well as public diplomacy in order to sensitise and raise awareness.

Actions focused on justice reform, notably against impunity and arbitrary detention, the elimination of torture and inhuman treatment and improving prisoners' detention conditions.

Particular attention was also given to the elimination of electoral violence; promotion of freedom of speech; reinforcement of civil society, including protection of human rights defenders; and reconciliation. All these issues were raised in the EU's regular political dialogue with the authorities, including the formal political dialogue session on 2 October 2014, as well as with the opposition and civil society.

The EU was particularly active in promoting the adoption of a constitutional framework agreed between all political parties. Unfortunately, the efforts undertaken by the different actors did not succeed and an agreement was not reached at the National Assembly, where the draft bill on a revision of the constitution was rejected, on 30 June. In cooperation with like-minded partners under the so-called G-5 group (EU, France, Germany, USA, United Nations), local statements were issued to encourage consensual reforms and promote dialogue.

Work with civil society organisations continued both as beneficiaries of EU-funded projects and as relevant counterparts in the EU political dialogue and public diplomacy. In this sense, civil society organisations were supported institutional-wise and in the implementation of their activities, with a special accent on national reconciliation.

A police training programme was launched to strengthen security forces' capacities in a more professional and human rights-compatible manner. The EU continued its activism for the implementation of the Commission's recommendations on truth, justice and reconciliation. Furthermore, the formulation of a new programme in the area of justice and security forces under the European Development Fund was almost completed. Finally, under the EIDHR, the EU is supporting a project aimed at providing legal assistance to inmates in several prisons.

Uganda

During 2014, the EU sought to promote the right to non-discrimination in its discussions with Uganda. Shortly before the adoption of the Anti-Homosexuality Act by Uganda on 24 February, the EU High Representative issued a declaration expressing deep concern at the impending enactment of draconian legislation to criminalise homosexuality and deploring discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation. On 4 March, the High Representative issued another declaration on behalf of the European Union condemning the adoption of the Anti-Homosexuality Act and underlining that the act contradicted the international commitments of the Ugandan government to respect and protect the fundamental human rights of all its citizens. The EU called upon Uganda to ensure equality before the law and non-discrimination in line with its obligations under international human rights law. The EU subsequently held an enhanced political dialogue with the Ugandan authorities under Article 8 of the Cotonou Agreement to discuss the act.

In July, the government of Uganda issued a statement clarifying its intentions under the act. The statement noted that no activities of individuals or groups would be affected by the act and underlined that the government of Uganda would continue to ensure equal treatment of all persons and to respect the constitutional right to privacy, as well as continuing to ensure full access to social and health services for all persons without discrimination. On 1 August, the Constitutional Court of Uganda quashed the act as unconstitutional, on the grounds that Parliament had been inquorate when the act was adopted.

Following the judgment of the Court, a committee was established under the chairmanship of Vice-President Edward Ssekandi to consider whether further steps would be taken on this issue. A number of Members of Parliament have also expressed a desire to introduce a new anti-homosexuality private members' bill. The EU continues to follow developments very closely.

In September, Human Rights Watch issued a report alleging that soldiers from the African Union Mission to Somalia (AMISOM), including Ugandan soldiers, had raped or sexually assaulted women who were seeking medical assistance, food or water at AMISOM bases. The EU encouraged all relevant actors to ensure a thorough and impartial investigation into these serious allegations. The African Union and the Ugandan authorities established investigations, and a number of senior Ugandan officers were suspended from duty.

The EU continued to provide technical assistance to the Ugandan authorities and civil society organisations to support implementation of the recommendations of the 2011 election observation mission to Uganda and to encourage the Ugandan authorities to adopt appropriate legislative and institutional reforms as soon as possible, in order to allow full implementation in time for the 2016 elections.

In October, the EU participated in an event hosted by the Foundation for Human Rights Initiative to commemorate the World Day against the Death Penalty. The EU delivered a speech at the event setting out the EU's position against capital punishment.

The EU Ugandan Human Rights Defender Award was granted in 2014 to Gladys Canogura, Executive Director, Kitgum Women's Peace Initiative, Mohammed Ndifuna, Chief Executive Officer, Human Rights Network Uganda and Christine Alalo, Assistant Commissioner of Police in charge of the Children and Family Protection Directorate of the Ugandan Police Force.

Zambia

Human rights are an important area in the EU's relations with Zambia. The EU's human rights objectives in the country include the abolition of the death penalty, the improvement of prison conditions, and the non-discrimination of citizens on the basis of sexual orientation. Addressing gender-based violence and promoting freedom of expression also constitute EU priorities in Zambia. These issues have been consistently tackled by the EU and EU Member States in dialogue with the government, opposition and civil society representatives.

During 2014, the EU engaged regularly with human rights defenders in Zambia. The EU Delegation held meetings to discuss the human rights situation in the country and the NGO Act, which controls NGO operations, and ensured regular attendance at a trial against two alleged LGBTI people charged with sodomy (who were eventually acquitted). The EU Delegation in Lusaka also issued an op-ed release on the occasion of the European Day against the Death Penalty.

Through the Access to Justice Programme the EU has given EUR 7.5 million to support various institutions such as the police, the judiciary, prisons, the Ministry of Justice and the National Prosecution Authority. In addition, in October 2014 the EU Delegation announced EUR 4 million to finance civil society projects aimed at empowering citizens so that they know, secure and enforce their human and democratic rights. Through the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights, EUR 590 000 were earmarked to support the rights of vulnerable groups in society and specifically prisoners and LGBTI people.

In 2015, the EU plans to continue its support by providing financing to projects aimed at the consolidation of democratic processes and institutions, namely to support electoral processes in Zambia, as well as to promote legal empowerment and enhanced justice delivery.

Zimbabwe

On 1 November 2014 the EU Appropriate Measures under Article 96 of the Cotonou Agreement expired. This now allows the EU to broaden its existing development cooperation in the country and for a political dialogue with the Government to take place including on human rights issues.

Overall the human rights situation in Zimbabwe throughout 2014 remained stable but fragile. While the level of political violence remained low compared to recent years, there were nevertheless a number of incidents which give cause for concern. Despite some positive statements from within government on the respect for land and property rights, farm invasions still occurred, including some seriously violent cases, against both black and white-owned properties. However, in 2014 there was an increase in the space in which civil society was able to operate freely.

Throughout 2014, the EU's support for human rights addressed both the institutions and civil society organisations engaged in the implementation of the new Constitution, particularly the new Declaration of Rights as well as socio-economic and cultural rights. Particular attention was paid to the strengthening of the rule of law, and promoting and protecting human rights defenders, women's and children's rights, and rights of persons belonging to minorities, all of which remain EU priorities in Zimbabwe.

In terms of financial support, in 2014 the EU provided indirect funding to Zimbabwean institutions such as the constitutional commissions, the judiciary and the Parliament. Through the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR), funds were dedicated to ensuring that incidents and human rights abuses continued to be reported in a timely manner and protection mechanisms were effectively in place. In 2014 the EU also funded projects to support the prevention of violence and the establishment of non-violent conflict resolution mechanisms at both national and local levels, targeting ordinary women and men, traditional leaders and policymakers. On gender equality, actions in 2014 focused on capacity building of female human rights defenders and greater equality concerning property and inheritance rights.

In terms of public diplomacy, the EU and Member States participated in the World Day of the Anti-Death Penalty campaign debate "Towards Total abolition of the Death Penalty in Zimbabwe", hosted by the Zimbabwe Association for Crime Prevention and Rehabilitation of the Offender (ZACRO) and co-funded by the Swiss Embassy in Zimbabwe.

Three EU statements were issued on Zimbabwe regarding the review of the restrictive measures against that country, the issue of political violence and intimidation following violence against several members of the MDC-T opposition party, and the lapsing of the appropriate measures under Article 96 of the Cotonou Agreement.

From March to June 2014, the EU continued its dialogue with civil society organisations by producing an extensive "EU Country Roadmap for Engagement with Civil Society 2014-2017" in Zimbabwe. While the Roadmap was drafted, consultations were held with the Government of Zimbabwe, as well as with civil society, around the approval of a National Indicative Programme (to be funded under the 11th European Development Fund, 2014-2020).

VI The Middle East and the Arabian Peninsula

Bahrain

Three years after the unrest in the Kingdom of Bahrain, the EU continued to closely monitor local developments and to express concern regarding the internal human rights situation.

Throughout 2014, the EU consistently called upon all sides to engage constructively in a process of genuine national reconciliation and inclusive dialogue, without preconditions and in a peaceful manner. The EU welcomed some of the initiatives undertaken by the government of Bahrain including the implementation of the recommendations of the Bahrain Independent Commission of Inquiry.

The EU closely followed the work of newly created institutions such as the Police Ombudsman for the Ministry of Interior, the National Institution for Human Rights (NIHR), and the Commission of the Prisoners' and Detainees' Rights Commission (PDRC). However, the necessary conditions for real and lasting reconciliation were not yet achieved and the EU repeatedly called on all Bahrainis to make use of the new institutions to make sure they can deliver concrete improvements, including on the basis of the robust recommendations made in the reports presented by the NIHR and Ombudsman. In recognition of the importance of the role that the NIHR and the Ombudsman office can play, EU Heads of Missions decided to award the EU Delegation Chaillot Prize for Human Rights to both institutions on 9 December 2014.

The EU continued to point out that the fight against impunity for perpetrators of human rights abuses remains one of the priority issues in Bahrain, even more so in a difficult and polarised climate such as the one experienced in recent years. This, together with other significant and concrete confidence-building steps on all sides, has the potential to restore gradual confidence leading to genuine national reconciliation.

The EU provided concrete support for this process through an expertise-sharing project under the Instrument for Stability (IfS), working with the National Institution for Human Rights, the Police Ombudsman's Office, the Ministry of Interior, the Ministry of Justice and the Attorney-General's Office, both chambers of the Parliament and lawyers. EU diplomats also attended court hearings involving political and human rights activists, including those of prominent figures such as Mr Nabeel Rajab.

In addition to a series of public statements⁴³, the HR/VP and the EEAS had regular direct contacts with Bahraini politicians and activists. The EEAS – at high official level – visited Bahrain in May 2014 and held a wide range of consultations with the authorities, opposition political societies, national human rights bodies and civil society actors, largely focusing on national reconciliation and the human rights situation. The EU Special Representative for Human Rights met with Bahraini Minister of Interior Lieutenant General Shaikh Rashid bin Abdullah Al Khalifa in Brussels, following up the EUSR's 2013 visit to Bahrain. The EUSR emphasised the importance of significant confidence-building measures, including the release of peaceful activists and the full implementation of BICI and UPR recommendations. The EUSR also reiterated the EU's readiness to support Bahrain's nascent human rights institutions in order for them to be able to fulfil their functions independently and effectively.

In the context of the municipal and parliamentary elections that took place on 22 and 29 November 2014, the EU encouraged all political groups to seize the opportunity presented by the vote to instil new momentum in national dialogue towards reform and national reconciliation, while calling on the authorities to reach out to the opposition and to consider confidence-building measures including the release of peaceful activists.

⁴³ 30/11/2014, Statement by the Spokesperson on the second round of parliamentary election in Bahrain (http://eeas.europa.eu/statements-eeas/2014/141130_02_en.htm); 25/09/2014, Statement by the Spokesperson on the upcoming parliamentary elections in Bahrain (http://www.eeas.europa.eu/statements/docs/2014/140925_02_en.pdf); 05/03/2014, Statement by EU High Representative Catherine Ashton on the bomb blast which killed three policemen in Bahrain (http://www.eeas.europa.eu/statements/docs/2014/140305_01_en.pdf); 16/01/2014, Statement by the Spokesperson of EU High Representative Catherine Ashton on recent political developments in Bahrain (http://www.eeas.europa.eu/statements/docs/2014/140116_04_en.pdf).

The EU encouraged the new government and newly elected Parliament to act in the interest of all segments of Bahraini society and to focus on delivery to respond to legitimate citizens' aspirations. It expected the new Parliament to play a constructive and positive role in promoting reform.

The European Parliament adopted an urgency resolution on Bahrain, concerning in particular the cases of Nabeel Rajab, Abdulhadi al-Khawaja and Ibrahim Sharif, on 6 February 2014 and mentioned the situation in Bahrain in its resolution on EU priorities for the 25th session of the UN Human Rights Council on 13 March 2014.

EU Member States unanimously supported a joint statement on the OHCHR and the human rights situation in Bahrain under Item 2 adopted on 10 June 2014 in Geneva.

Iran

Despite the hopeful signals in 2013 after the election of President Rouhani, for instance with the release of a number of prisoners of conscience, no progress on human rights was made in 2014. A lack of fundamental freedoms and violations of basic human rights including women's rights, in contravention of Iran's international obligations, continued to be observed.

There is no political or human rights dialogue with Iran at the moment, which makes EU objectives on human rights and democracy particularly difficult to achieve.

The EU nevertheless continued to address human rights with Iran whenever possible, using a variety of formal and informal, public and private avenues to approach the Iranian authorities. In March 2014, former HR/VP Ashton visited Iran. This was the first high-level EU visit in a decade. During her meetings with Iranian political leaders, human rights-related issues were discussed. The visit coincided with International Women's Day, giving the HR/VP the opportunity to meet with a number of women's rights activists in Tehran.

With more than 460 executions reported to have taken place in 2014 (500 executions were reported in 2013), the application of the death penalty was a major human rights issue raised by the EU. The EU issued statements and a declaration with the EU Member States on some individual cases and called upon the Iranian government to refrain from using the death penalty.

The European Parliament continued to take a keen interest in the human rights situation in Iran. In April 2014, the Parliament adopted a resolution on Iran in which it expressed its serious concern over the state of play of human rights in the country.

Iran underwent its Universal Periodic Review (UPR). The EU participated in the preparations and while Iran stated that it respects the UPR mechanism, it did not immediately accept any of the 291 recommendations, stating instead that it would respond to them in due course, but not later than at the 28th session of the HRC (March 2015).

In 2014, the EU also supported the United Nations General Assembly resolution tabled by Canada on human rights in Iran.

Iraq

EU action focused on supporting a peaceful government transition following general elections on 30 April and on encouraging the government to increase respect for human rights, in particular for the most vulnerable groups, in line with Iraq's international commitments and the national human rights action plan.

The EU coordinated local diplomatic missions' efforts during the electoral process. Particular attention was paid to voter registration, security of the polling stations, local observation, capacity of the Independent High Electoral Commission and independence and safety of journalists. An EU Election Expert Mission was in Iraq between 5 April and 11 May 2014.

The human rights situation was considerably exacerbated by ISIL/Da'esh and other terrorist groups' assault in June. This violent take-over of large swathes of the Iraqi territory led to massive displacement and egregious human rights violations, in particular of vulnerable groups such as ethnic and religious minorities, women and children. The crisis produced 2.1 million internally displaced people, in addition to the 225 000 estimated refugees from Syria. The EU humanitarian response was immediate with an additional EUR 20 million in 2014 for Iraq.

The EU continued to engage in human rights and democracy discussions in various formats, formal demarches as well as bilateral dialogue at expert and political levels. Respect for democratic principles, human rights and the rule of law are also essential elements of the EU-Iraq Partnership and Cooperation Agreement. A special sub-committee on democracy and human rights regularly meets in this framework. In January 2014, human rights were also on the agenda of the Cooperation Council (ministerial level).

The EU committed to support the new government and Prime Minister Al Abadi in the implementation of its work programme, with a particular stress on reforms in governance, rule of law and the security sector. It also called on the government to reach out to all components of Iraqi society and to start a process of national reconciliation.

The European Council and the Foreign Affairs Ministers strongly condemned the brutal acts committed by ISIL/Da'esh and other terrorist groups and called for the perpetrators to be brought to justice. The EU also raised its concerns on human rights violations committed by security forces and allied militia.

The European Parliament condemned ISIL/Da'esh's actions on several occasions and adopted several resolutions on the situation in Iraq. The fifth European Parliament and Iraq Parliamentary Meeting took place in Brussels in December.

Several recommendations, which the EU shares, were formulated in the November Universal Periodic Review on Iraq. The EU supported the Human Rights Council's resolution on "The human rights situation in Iraq in the light of abuses committed by the so-called Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant and associated groups" and the decision to deploy a special team to Iraq to investigate violations and abuses of human rights committed by ISIL/Da'esh.

Iraq benefits from several EU-funded projects related to human rights, rule of law, education and support for local authorities. The EU recently launched a programme on the implementation of rule of law and criminal justice reform with a strong emphasis on the promotion and respect of human rights.

Kuwait

The main issues that the EU raised with the Kuwaiti authorities were the situation of the Bidoons (stateless residents), the death penalty, freedom of expression and the situation of foreign labourers and domestic workers.

The EU actively encouraged Kuwait to continue to improve the situation of domestic workers. The EU Delegation in Riyadh, which is accredited to Kuwait, continued to engage with the Social Work Society of Kuwait⁴⁴, an NGO that has been instrumental in improving conditions for domestic workers, including through legislative reform.

The European Parliament's standing delegation for relations with the Arab Peninsula (DARP) visited Kuwait for the seventh EP-Kuwait inter-parliamentary meeting on 25-27 March 2014. In its final statement⁴⁵ and report⁴⁶, the delegation highlighted in particular that Kuwait, with its democratic institutions and lively civil society, can serve as a source of inspiration to its neighbours in the region. It also encouraged the Kuwaiti authorities to reform the Kafala system, and to address the lack of legislation regarding domestic workers. The delegation also addressed the situation of stateless people in Kuwait (bidoon) and noted that this issue would also be examined in the National Assembly.

⁴⁴ The Social Work Society of Kuwait received the EU Delegation Chaillot Prize in 2012.

⁴⁵ STATEMENT OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT'S DELEGATION FOR RELATIONS WITH THE ARAB PENINSULA, Kuwait City, 27 March 2014, <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/document/activities/cont/201403/20140331ATT82031/20140331ATT82031EN.pdf>

⁴⁶ DELEGATION FOR RELATIONS WITH THE ARAB PENINSULA 3rd EP/Qatar and 7th EP/Kuwait Interparliamentary Meetings, 22 - 28 March 2014, <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/document/activities/cont/201406/20140626ATT85904/20140626ATT85904EN.pdf>

Oman

The EU was concerned about several court cases raised against people who protested or expressed views on social media, but it also noted that pardons were granted in most of these cases. Another issue of concern for the EU was discrimination against expatriate workers, in the application of the labour laws and in practice, and their general status and situation. The EU liaised with the Omani authorities on the situation of foreign workers and on human trafficking.

Maina Kiai, UN Special Rapporteur on the rights of peaceful assembly and association, visited Oman on 18 September and stated that the right of Omanis to peaceful assembly is "virtually non-existent in practice." Maina Kiai's report on the visit will be released in early to mid-2015, and will be presented to the Human Rights Council during its 29th session in June 2015.⁴⁷

Qatar

The EU and its Member States focused particularly on freedom of expression and the development of independent media; efforts to strengthen civil society via more liberal legislation on freedom of association and civil society initiatives; support for human rights defenders; women's rights; and improving the working and living conditions of migrant workers.

Global attention focused on the conditions of migrant workers in Qatar, following reports of unpaid wages, shortcomings in the areas of health and safety, inadequate housing, and unscrupulous labour agents in the workers' countries of origin in the run-up to the FIFA World Cup 2022.

In the framework of the last Universal Periodic Review for Qatar, which was issued on 7 May 2014, the EU coordinated with the EU Member States on common EU positions including on migrant, labour and women's rights.

In this respect, the EU welcomed the Qatari government's pledge to adopt new legislation to replace the controversial 'kafala' (sponsorship) system by early 2015 and will follow its implementation as an important element in its relationship and cooperation with Qatar.

⁴⁷ <http://freemassembly.net/rapporteurreports/oman/>

A human rights-related visit by Members of the European Parliament took place in March, during which Qatari officials and civil society representatives engaged in an open and comprehensive dialogue on the human rights situation, with the main focus on the empowerment of women in Qatari society and the situation of migrant workers⁴⁸.

Qatar is also facing a complaint under Article 26 of the ILO Constitution for violation of ILO Convention 81 on Labour Inspection and Convention 29 on Forced Labour, filed against the state in the ILO. A tripartite discussion took place on 12 November at the ILO Governing Body, during which Qatar reiterated its openness to engage with international bodies and the ILO in particular to improve the rights of migrant workers. The EU, in its common statement, welcomed the announcement and encouraged Qatari authorities to take, within a clear timescale, the appropriate steps to enhance enforcement measures, including through labour inspection. The EU also called on Qatar and social partners to cooperate further with the ILO, in particular to implement the recommendations concerning forced labour.

Although the Qatari authorities seem open to changes in the labour law and to cooperation with the ILO on improvements in migrants' rights, the sponsorship system should be expected to remain in one form or another.

In this context, the EU is also closely following the latest developments, as a broader regional GCC announcement of a unified contract for domestic workers was agreed by all six labour ministers.

Saudia Arabia

The EU consistently engaged with the Saudi authorities on human rights concerns in the Kingdom, while encouraging ongoing reform measures. The areas of main concern include the male guardianship system and women's rights; the death penalty; access to justice; the restrictions of freedom of expression and religious tolerance; and foreign labourers' rights.

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<http://www.europarl.europa.eu/document/activities/cont/201403/20140325ATT81738/20140325ATT81738EN.pdf>

The EEAS conducted several formal and informal outreach initiatives towards the Saudi authorities in several human rights-related judiciary cases in close coordination with EU Member States and like-minded partners.

The EU had regular contacts with civil society organisations and human rights defenders and raised cases of concern with the relevant authorities. Since 2013, the EU Delegation had obtained permission for diplomats to attend public trials. Also, together with Member State embassies, the EU continued to encourage Saudi authorities to rapidly adopt a long-awaited NGO law.

On 18 February 2014, the European Parliament's Committee on Foreign Affairs published a report on Saudi Arabia, its relations with the EU and its role in the Middle East and North Africa, in which it expressed its concerns and acknowledged the changes in Saudi society in the last period.⁴⁹

The EU shares some of the UN human rights experts' concerns about overly broad counter-terrorism measures which could lead to abuse of non terrorist-related human rights and on-line political activists.

In this context, the EU noted that on 7 March, Saudi Arabia issued a list formally designating several organisations, including the Muslim Brotherhood, the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS), "Hezbollah in the Kingdom", Yemen's Houthi Movement and all branches of Al-Qaeda, including the Al-Nusra Front, as terrorist organisations.

United Arab Emirates

The EU continued to closely monitor the human rights situation in the United Arab Emirates, noting the recent positive steps taken in the fields of migrant labour rights, women's rights and gender equality, and in the fight against human trafficking.

⁴⁹ Report on Saudi Arabia, its relations with the EU and its role in the Middle East and North Africa (2013/2147(INI)), 18 February 2014
<http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=-//EP//TEXT+REPORT+A7-2014-0125+0+DOC+XML+V0//EN>

Following a first inaugural meeting in Brussels in November 2013, the second (Abu Dhabi, 28-29 April 2014) and third (Brussels, 20 November 2014) meetings of the EU-UAE bilateral technical working group on human rights were successfully held, gathering participants from the EEAS, the European Commission, the UAE Ministry of Foreign Affairs and UAE line ministries (Ministry of Interior, Ministry of Labour). The meetings addressed the full range of EU concerns, including the death penalty, migrant and domestic workers' labour rights, the rule of law and governance.

The EU also continued to encourage the UAE authorities to ensure follow-up to the 2012 UN UPR, and welcomed the abstention of the UAE on the EU-sponsored UN third committee resolution on a moratorium on the death penalty adopted on 21 November 2014 in New York.

On 7 February 2014, the EU issued a public statement⁵⁰ by the HR/VP on the presidential decree ordering a stay on all executions in the UAE, expressing the hope that this development would set a positive example for the wider region to adopt similar measures paving the way for the abolition of the death penalty.

Yemen

The EU stepped up its engagement with Yemen on human rights and democracy. It focused in particular on strengthening the protection and promotion of civil and political rights, including the empowerment of women (Yemen ranks last in the global Gender Gap Index). EU assistance and political engagement, closely coordinated with international partners and the UN, aimed to strengthen institutions and reform-minded actors, including human rights defenders.

The juvenile death penalty, child soldiers and child marriage were issues of particular concern. EU advocacy and assistance, together with UNICEF, contributed to setting up a forensic committee to review cases of alleged juveniles in the judicial process. The EU welcomed the signature by the government of the UN Action Plan against Child Soldiers in May 2014 and supported its implementation.

⁵⁰ http://www.eeas.europa.eu/statements/docs/2014/140207_01_en.pdf

EU engagement on women's rights continued to be broad, focusing on women's political representation, improvement of daily conditions, health and conditions of detained women. The EU also actively addressed issues related to rights of persons belonging to minorities and freedom of religion or belief (FORB) affecting the Baha'i community.

The EU's engagement also focused on human trafficking, with particular reference to the worsening conditions of migrants and refugees from the Horn of Africa as well as Yemeni returnees from the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. The EU and its Member States provided EUR 124 million in humanitarian assistance in 2014, including to address the physical and psychological needs of migrants, refugees and internally displaced people.

HR/VP Ashton expressed the EU's support for the implementation of the Peace and National Partnership Agreement of 21 September in addition to the implementation of the recommendations of the National Dialogue Conference (NDC). Both documents put human rights issues at the forefront. Furthermore, in its conclusions of 10 February and 20 October 2014, the EU Foreign Affairs Council called on Yemen to implement the NDC recommendations on rights and freedoms. The EU Delegation regularly engaged on all these issues with the government and all the parties having participated in the NDC.

The EU delegation launched a call for proposals under the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR) for a total of EUR 2 116 100. The priority areas include (a) strengthening equal citizenship and promoting democratic processes, (b) strengthening the rule of law in relation to protection of vulnerable groups, and (c) promotion and protection of fundamental rights and freedoms.

The EU works with both the government and civil society and supports projects in a wide range of areas including women's rights, children's rights, support for human rights defenders, protection of minority groups, and capacity building for civil society to monitor and report on the human rights situation across Yemen.

The EU's planned support in the area of governance and rule of law bears an essential human rights element. A project supporting the Ministry of Interior's reform under the Instrument contributing to Stability and Peace, will strengthen the Inspector General (including his role of oversight of human rights) and citizen-focused policy-making with a strong role for civil society organisations.

VII Asia

Afghanistan

The EU's political dialogue with the Afghan authorities focused on the necessary improvement of the human rights policy and its implementation. Key areas of concern continued to be women's and children's rights, civil society and human rights defenders, torture and abuse, freedoms of expression, religion and/or belief, the death penalty and access to justice.

The EU continued to support the strengthening of international, regional and national frameworks for the protection and promotion of human rights. The EU played a leading role in the Tokyo Mutual Accountability Framework (TMAF), working on the implementation of reforms in areas such as governance, rule of law and human rights, including women's rights. The EU helped ensure that the Joint Coordination and Monitoring Board (JCMB) meeting in January and the London Conference on 3–4 December had a strong focus on human rights and gender, and emphasised the need to maintain and further consolidate gains while expressing concerns regarding the human rights situation in Afghanistan. The EU also funded a number of Afghan civil society organisations to enable their participation in the London Conference.

At the invitation of the Afghan Government and the Independent Election Commission, the EU deployed an Election Assessment Team (EU EAT), composed of 16 election experts from 12 Member States, to assess key stages of the presidential elections of 5 April, including the run-off on 14 June. More than 100 long term observers reinforced the team during the audit of all the votes cast in the second round. On 16 December in Kabul, the EU EAT Chief Observer, Thijs Berman, presented the final report, which includes an overall assessment of the election process and recommendations on improving the electoral framework ahead of future elections.

The EU continued to express the need for judicial reform to better implement the statutory measures concerning the rights of women, including the implementation of the Elimination of Violence against Women (EVAW) Law, and to improve women's access to justice. The EU repeatedly called for the release of the first EVAW Law report, which was finally published in March 2014.

The EU also repeatedly called upon the government to appoint a new Chief Justice and replace members in the Supreme Court whose mandate had expired. The EU commended President Ghani for his intention to prioritise the reform of the justice sector, his initial action in appointing a new Acting Chief Justice, and his resolve to appoint a female judge to the Supreme Court. The EU supported the justice sector (EUR 20 million) through the Afghanistan Reconstruction Trust Fund and the Justice Service Delivery project implemented by the World Bank.

The EU called on the Afghan Government to demonstrate political commitment and support to the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission (AIHRC) and stressed the importance of a constructive approach from the government to enable the AIHRC to retain the "A" Status.

The EU released numerous public statements addressing cases of major human rights violations, notably as regards civilian casualties resulting from terrorism and the armed conflict, the death penalty, women's rights and violence against women. The EU repeatedly emphasised the need for women to participate in the elections. The EU actively participated in the National Steering Committee set up to promote implementation of UNSCR 1325 on women, peace and security. The EU and Member States provided technical input into the National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security, whose release is expected in February 2015.

The EU delivered a demarche in March to promote the "Children, not Soldiers" campaign. In August, a presidential decree was issued on the prohibition of recruiting children for the national security forces. The EU also delivered two demarches against the execution of six people (3 and 7 October), urging the government not to carry out the sentences, and issued a public statement reiterating its strong opposition to capital punishment after all six were executed on 8 October. The European Parliament also demonstrated continued attention to the human rights situation, in particular the situation of women, which was at the forefront of many parliamentary questions.

The EU continued to support public events that promote human rights and women's rights. It continued to chair the bi-weekly local EU+ Human Rights and Gender working group. The EU produced a five-month gender action plan and held a workshop on human rights defenders on 1-2 October. The revised local EU strategy on human rights defenders was published on 10 December; meetings with human rights defenders took place bi-monthly.

The EU continued to be a key donor championing human rights through its various instruments and thematic programmes. 15 projects were under implementation in 2014 under the Non-State Actors and Local Authorities programme, and 12 projects under the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR) and the Instrument for Stability. Additional programmes to fund civil society organisations were put in the pipeline for 2014/2015. These projects supported women's rights, including counselling and mediation for women and girls affected by family violence, human rights defenders, journalists, the rights of persons belonging to minorities and refugees, capacity building and awareness raising activities for justice personnel and community stakeholders, monitoring of women's rights in transition, victims' shuras, and capacities of NGOs and local communities at the provincial level to follow up on the EVAW Law and UNSCR 1325.

The EU police mission (EUPOL Afghanistan) advised the Head of the Human Rights, Women's and Children's Affairs Department as well as the Head of the Family Response Unit within the Ministry of Interior. EUPOL conducted a range of training sessions on violence against women for both police and prosecutors and provided equipment, including audio recorders and cameras. Sexual harassment and assault of female police officers remained a concern in 2014. EUPOL developed a female police leadership training course, and trained female police officers and prosecutors within the Unaas Mushtarak ("Women Together") programme in Kabul, Mazar-e Sharif and Herat. EUPOL supported and advised the Ministry of Interior on the implementation of its strategy on female police. EUPOL also participated in the Criminal Law Reform Working Group (CLRWG), which is drafting the Afghan Penal Code.

Due to delays in the Afghan political process, hardly any progress was achieved in the negotiations of the Cooperation Agreement on Partnership and Development, in which human rights provisions should figure prominently as essential elements.

Bangladesh

The EU objectives on human rights and democracy include judicial reform, a death penalty moratorium, implementation of the Chittagong Hill Tracts Peace Accord, support for Rohingyas, rights of persons belonging to minorities, human rights defenders, women's and children's rights, support for civil society and implementation of labour rights.

In the framework of the EU-Bangladesh Co-operation Agreement, the EU regularly engaged with the government on issues of governance, human rights and migration.

Due to concerns regarding the lack of inclusiveness and credibility, and violence during the pre-election period, the EU did not deploy an election observation mission for the 5 January elections. The circumstances surrounding the elections contributed to a polarised political climate. The government, unchallenged by the parliament, has proposed revisions to the Foreign Donations Act (pending parliamentary approval) and a new broadcast policy, which if implemented as drafted may restrict freedom of expression and activities of civil society. A constitutional amendment allowing the parliament to impeach Supreme Court judges passed with a 2/3 majority.

On 9 January, the EU High Representative strongly condemned the acts of violence in the run-up to the elections, particularly attacks against the most vulnerable members of the population, including women and children as well as religious and ethnic minorities. The High Representative expressed regret over the fact that favourable conditions for transparent, inclusive and credible elections did not materialise and that the people of Bangladesh were not given an opportunity to express fully their democratic choice. She urged all parties to refrain from violence and to engage in genuine dialogue to agree on a mutually acceptable way forward to strengthen democratic accountability and to hold transparent, inclusive and credible elections.

The EU also reacted in public statements on 29 October and 5 November to several death sentences issued by the Bangladeshi "International Crimes Tribunal" to persons convicted for war crimes during the 1971 Liberation War. The EU reiterated its strong and absolute opposition to capital punishment and called on the Bangladeshi authorities to stay all pending executions and establish a moratorium on the use of the death penalty, as a step towards its abolition.

The European Parliament adopted two resolutions on human rights violations in Bangladesh. The resolution of 15 January focused on the elections and condemned, inter alia, the restriction of the freedom of speech during the voting and called on the Government of Bangladesh to halt excessive use of force by the security forces. The resolution of 18 September focused on restrictions of media freedom, civil society activities, reports of extra-judicial killings and the improvement of workers' rights, security in factories and compensation to victims of the 2013 collapse of the Rana Plaza building. In December, the Chair of the European Parliament South Asia Committee visited Bangladesh, and engaged on human rights with a wide range of stakeholders.

Another significant development in 2014 was the EU's intensive cooperation with the government of Bangladesh, the US and the ILO, in order to implement the Sustainability Compact to improve labour rights, working conditions and factory safety in Bangladesh's ready-made garment industry. This was in response to the Rana Plaza collapse in 2013, which killed more than one thousand people. During the ILO International Labour Conference in May/June 2014, the EU welcomed the progress of Bangladesh in implementing several commitments under the Sustainability Compact, in particular on freedom of association and health and safety in the workplace. The EU welcomed the efforts made by the Government to change national law and bring it into full compliance with ILO conventions, especially through the amendments to the Bangladesh Labour Act and the proposed law titled "Bangladesh Export Processing Zones Labour Act 2014". The EU also stressed the need of further efforts to ensure the full implementation of the Compact, including on issues related to freedom of association, and urged the Government to continue the Modernization and Strengthening of the Department of Inspection for Factories and Establishments by restructuring and expanding it.

A high-level review meeting was held in Brussels on 20 October 2014, where urgent implementation of commitments in those areas was addressed.

The EU continued its dialogue with civil society organisations, including by organising a one-day civil society seminar in Brussels on 4 November, to discuss how civil society can contribute to democratic sustainability.

The EU continued to provide financial support to Bangladesh in line with its Cooperation Agreement with the country, in which respect for human rights and democratic principles is an essential element. Strengthening democratic government is part of the Multi-Annual Indicative Programme for 2014-2020. Support was provided to human rights NGOs through the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights.

Bhutan

The EU objectives on human rights and democracy are to strengthen civil and political rights in a democratic setting, assist in combating discrimination of the Bhutanese Nepali-speaking minority, protect women's rights and collect substantive information on the country's human rights situation. The EU continued to engage on human rights and democracy with Bhutan in various formats, building on the last (fifth) Biennial Consultations in Brussels on 29 November 2013. Continued delays with the implementation of the process to identify and repatriate Bhutanese Nepali-speaking refugees in Nepal remained a major issue, together with the non-ratification of core international human rights instruments. There were also concerns about restrictions on freedom of assembly and association, as well as freedom of religion, children's and women's rights, legislation prohibiting consensual same-sex sexual activity, and human trafficking.

An EU Heads of Mission visit to Bhutan took place from 28 April to 2 May and provided a good opportunity to engage with the Bhutanese leadership on human rights and the democratisation process. Commissioner Piebalgs visited Bhutan in October and congratulated the Bhutanese leadership for the successful democratic transition and socio-economic progress.

Bhutan received a positive review in the context of its second Universal Periodic Review (UPR) in 2014, in which EU Member States participated. Since the last UPR in 2009, Bhutan had made significant progress in entrenching its democratic process, with the successful general elections in 2013 which resulted in the transfer of power between the two major political parties. Bhutan had furthermore addressed a series of recommendations it received in several fields, such as access to social services (health, education), poverty eradication, tackling domestic violence, gender issues, and corruption.

One of two focal sectors of the EU development programme 2014-20 is the support of local authorities and civil society with an allocation of approximately EUR 24 million. The overall objective is to consolidate Bhutan's modernisation and democratisation process. The specific objectives are to empower local authorities, develop civil society structures and capacities, and improve public finances management at central and local level.

Brunei

The EU is negotiating a Partnership and Cooperation Agreement (PCA) with Brunei. Five negotiation rounds had been completed so far.

On 1 May 2014, Brunei introduced the first phase of a new sharia penal code which applies a number of civil and religious offences in parallel with the common law criminal code, to be implemented in three phases over three years. It deals with offences punishable by fines or jail terms, the second covers offences punishable by flogging and amputations, whereas the third lays down the death penalty by stoning for adultery, sodomy and apostasy. There is no indication yet when the second or third phases, which require trigger legislation, might be introduced. In a public statement, the HR/VP expressed concern on 13 May about the consistency of the possible application of such penalties with Brunei's international human rights commitments.

According to the UN, the penal code "violates international law as stoning people to death constitutes torture or other cruel, inhumane or degrading treatment or punishment and is thus clearly prohibited".

Myanmar/Burma

The EU's objective is to build a strong relationship between the EU and the government of Myanmar/Burma, the opposition, civil society and other important stakeholders in order to facilitate regular dialogue and progress on the promotion and protection of human rights.

The EU continued to engage in human rights and democracy discussions with Myanmar/Burma in various formats, including political dialogue, a new dedicated human rights dialogue, regular meetings with civil society, parliamentary cooperation, support for the Union Election Commission and the funding of human rights and democracy projects.

The EUSR for Human Rights, Stavros Lambrinidis, co-chaired the first EU-Myanmar Human Rights Dialogue in Nay Pyi Taw on 20 May, which addressed the following issues: political prisoners, conditions of detention, freedom of expression, freedom of media, hate speech, land rights, business and human rights, situation in Rakhine State, rights of persons belonging to ethnic minorities, religious harmony, ratification and implementation of core human rights conventions and cooperation in multilateral fora. Hate speech, land rights and business and human rights were identified as topics for potential follow-up.

In its political dialogue, the EU expressed growing concern at the situation in Rakhine State and called on the government to address the underlying causes of inter-communal violence, including the status and welfare of the Rohingya. The EU urged the government to end the impunity of those who incite hatred and violence and to ensure accountability. The EU called on all leaders to speak up against incitement to hatred. Following the suspension of the activities of Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) in February and violence against international aid agencies in March, the EU urged the government to provide unimpeded humanitarian access to communities most in need and to allow MSF to resume vital health services in Rakhine State. The EU welcomed the government's initiative to draft a Rakhine State Action Plan to "promote peace and development" and shared its comments on how to improve the promotion of human rights and fundamental freedoms.

The EU also expressed concern over draft legislation that could enshrine religious discrimination in law by restricting interfaith marriage, religious conversion and childbirth, and also run counter to women's rights.

Ahead of the first EU-Myanmar Human Rights Dialogue on 20 May, the EU organised a civil society forum, whose recommendations were shared with the government. On 23 May, the EU hosted a Civil Society Dialogue Network event to discuss civil society's role in the peace process. The EU held consultations in Yangon, Mandalay and Mawlamyine in September and October to further strengthen cooperation with civil society and inform the formulation of the EU country roadmap for engagement with civil society.

In March the United Nations Human Rights Council adopted a resolution presented by the EU, which extended the mandate of the UN Special Rapporteur on Myanmar/Burma.

For the third year in a row, the United Nations General Assembly's Third Committee adopted by consensus the resolution on the human rights situation in Myanmar/Burma presented by the EU. While the resolution welcomes the positive developments and the government's commitment to ongoing democratic transition and reforms, it urges the government to accelerate efforts to address discrimination, human rights violations, violence, hate speech, displacement and economic deprivation affecting various ethnic and religious minorities, and attacks against Muslims. The resolution reiterates serious concern over the situation of the Rohingya in Rakhine State. The government committed to opening a country office of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights.

Democratic values and a human rights-based approach to development are mainstreamed in all EU development programmes. The EU uses bilateral programmes under the Development Cooperation Instrument and funds projects through the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR), the Instrument contributing to Stability and Peace and the Investing in People programme.

During 2014, the EU continued to provide support and to assist Myanmar/Burma in the democratic transition, in line with the Comprehensive Framework adopted in 2013, which sets out goals and priorities until 2015 and defines key areas of involvement, including elimination of forced labour, adoption of sustainable and responsible business standards, such as Decent Work, ratification of remaining core ILO conventions, progress towards inclusive growth, promotion of economic and social rights. During the ILO Governing Body in March 2014, the EU welcomed the progress observed in the country on the issue of forced labour, and encouraged the Government to step up its efforts to eliminate all forms of forced labour and underage recruitment by 2015.

With regards to foreign investments, in 2014 the EU worked with the authorities, the private sector and the people of the country to create the best possible regulatory environment and to promote responsible investment.

Current projects strengthen independent ethnic media groups, support public debate on the elections in 2015 and the peace process in ethnic areas, raise awareness of the mutually reinforcing role of the media, CSOs and political groups in democratisation processes, strengthen the work of local civil society on electoral analysis and democracy reform advocacy, promote political awareness of communities and civic education of their representatives, with particular emphasis on women's participation, and promote labour rights.

Projects also focus on promoting human rights of marginalised groups, supporting people with disabilities to engage in advocacy and better promote their own rights, and the empowerment of ethnic children and youth to participate in local decision making.

Funding was also provided for electoral support through assistance to the Union Election Commission.

Myanmar/Burma has been identified as a pilot country under the Agenda for Action on Democracy Support.

Cambodia

Human rights and democratisation continued to be the top priorities of the EU, and were mainstreamed in all activities in 2014. Regular meetings were held with the government and with civil society where the human rights situation and human rights cases were discussed. Most of the visits up country included meetings with local human rights defenders.

The EU provided support to the mission of the UN Special Rapporteur on human rights in Cambodia, Professor Suriya Subedi, and shared his assessment that the human rights situation in Cambodia is "evolving in a generally positive direction" but that serious concerns remain. The EU also provided its political support to the OHCHR in a number of human rights cases.

The eighth EU-Cambodia Joint Committee in March included a dedicated dialogue on "Institution Building, Administrative Reform, Legal Reform, Governance and Human Rights", focused on legal and judicial reform, freedom of expression, the protection and promotion of land rights, post-electoral reform and freedom of association, institutional protection for human rights, including women's rights, migration and cooperation on human rights in the UN and regional fora.

The legal and judicial reform remains one of the major human rights challenges. The EU financially supported NGO projects advocating legal reform, monitoring trials, giving legal support to individuals or groups and providing training to officials. The EU regularly engaged the government on judiciary reform together with Member States represented in Cambodia. The recommendations of the Universal Periodic Review continued to be raised in meetings with Cambodian ministers.

The EU remained strongly committed to national reconciliation and the effort of memory in Cambodia. In a statement in August 2014 the EU welcomed the verdict by the Extraordinary Chambers in the Courts of Cambodia (ECCC) of life imprisonment against two senior leaders of the former Democratic Kampuchea. The EU contributed substantially to the functioning of the Court and this support is set to increase in the new financial framework (2014-2020) when the EU is expected to become a member of the ECCC Principal Donor Group. Moreover, the EU provided support to the implementation by civil society of a genocide education programme based on intercultural dialogue and human rights, thereby contributing to the truth, national reconciliation and genocide prevention process in Cambodia.

Land grabbing was identified by the UN Special Rapporteur on human rights in Cambodia as an important factor in political instability, unrest, violence and a cause of arrests of protesters. Positive developments (land titling campaign; a moratorium on the granting of new economic land concessions; solving of some land disputes in favour of villagers and more recently the removal of concessions from companies not respecting their commitments) took place with the active support of the EU at all levels. The EU participated in the working group set up by the prime minister, which is preparing a mechanism of fair compensation for victims of land evictions linked to sugar cane production. The EU Delegation sent observers to most of the trials connected with human rights and land issues.

Following the 2013 elections, the EU continuously encouraged the ruling and opposition parties to resume dialogue and put an end to the political instability which had led to violent demonstrations resulting in the killing of five people, a shrinking of the democratic space and arrests of protesters and members of the opposition. In July, the two main political parties reached an agreement that unblocked the stalemate and ended the opposition's boycott of the National Assembly. The EU High Representative welcomed this development. Subsequent arrests of opposition members, ostensibly linked to the negotiations on the National Election Committee and Electoral Law, caused concern that the EU did not neglect to relay both directly to the authorities and via local statements in the press and in social media.

Throughout the year, the EU also provided comprehensive support to NGO projects in areas such as the promotion of the freedoms of expression and association, women's rights, in particular the empowerment of women, the removal of income barriers, the fight against all forms of violence and human trafficking.

People's Republic of China

In 2014, the EU objectives on human rights remained the ratification of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR, signed in 1998) with, as a medium-term objective, respect of the ICCPR provisions as well as certain provisions of China's Constitution, Criminal Law and Criminal Procedure Law. The EU also pursued its global campaign against the death penalty, especially as China remains the country with the highest number of executions, in spite of its efforts to reduce significantly the number of crimes incurring the death penalty. As one of the central pillars of the ICCPR, freedom of expression in China, on-line and off-line, also remained an EU priority, as did the development of a healthy and diverse civil society and active human rights defenders. Last but not least, the EU continued to promote the enjoyment of all human rights by persons belonging to minorities, not least Uighurs and Tibetans.

The EU continued to engage China on human rights at all levels. Presidents Van Rompuy and Barroso met President Xi Jinping during his historic visit to Europe and, in a joint statement on 1 April, the two sides reaffirmed "the importance of the promotion and protection of human rights. Both sides agreed to deepen exchanges on human rights at the bilateral and international level on the basis of equality and mutual respect, and to strengthen their human rights dialogue with constructive discussions on jointly agreed key priority areas." In early March, Vice Foreign Minister Li Baodong came to Europe, prior to President Xi's visit, and met EUSR Lambrinidis in order to discuss the arrangements for the EU-China human rights dialogue, in the context of strengthening EU-China cooperation on human rights. The EU also raised human rights when Presidents Van Rompuy and Barroso met Premier Li Keqiang in October, in the margins of the ASEM summit in Milan.

The 33rd EU-China Human Rights Dialogue held in December allowed the EU to express its concerns on a wide range of human rights issues in China, such as the right to adequate housing and reform of the Hukou system, the rights of persons belonging to minorities, especially in Tibet and Xinjiang, freedom of religion or belief, freedom of expression (off-line and on-line), freedom of peaceful assembly and association, the due process of law, arbitrary detention, and the death penalty. Individual cases were raised in the context of the discussion about China's human rights situation, including those of Liu Xiabo, Ilham Tohti, Gao Yu, Hada, Pu Zhiqiang, Xu Zhiyong, Tenzin Delek Rinpoche and Gao Zhisheng.

Cooperation in international fora and the implementation of recommendations from international bodies were also discussed. In that context the UN Human Rights Committee's recommendation regarding the ICCPR provision on the right to vote and the right to stand for elections and its application to Hong Kong was raised. Women's rights and technical cooperation were also discussed. During a joint press conference, the two co-chairs answered European and Chinese correspondents' questions about the dialogue. The Chinese delegation also met EU Special Representative Lambrinidis on 8 December. The dialogue was followed by a meeting with civil society experts on domestic violence.

The EU released several statements regarding human rights, for example, the treatment of human rights defenders and their relatives in February; the knife attack at Kunming train station and the death of human rights defender Cao Shunli in March; the wave of arrests and detentions in May; the situation in Xinjiang in July, and the indictment of Professor Tohti in August and his sentencing in September.

The EU devoted a considerable amount of attention to trial observation although foreign diplomats and journalists are normally barred. The EU also engaged in public diplomacy efforts and outreach on many human rights issues, also in follow-up to recommendations made at the 2013 Universal Periodic Review of China. Moreover, the EU supported projects aimed at awareness raising on worker's rights and improving the situation of persons with disabilities.

The EU referred to the human rights situation in China in its statements made during the three sessions of the Human Rights Council, in March, June and September, and at the UN's 69th General Assembly. The overall message of those statements was to express deep concerns over the arrest and detention of peaceful human rights defenders – urging the Chinese authorities to release those detained for exercising their right to freedom of conscience, expression and association – and also to express concerns about the human rights situation in Tibet and Xinjiang – encouraging China to address the grievances of ethnic and religious groups, and to foster a meaningful dialogue with and between different ethnic groups.

Hong Kong

The EU closely followed developments related to the introduction of universal suffrage for the election of the Chief Executive in 2017. On 18 July and 2 October, the EU issued statements reiterating its support for deeper democratisation, the introduction of universal suffrage and a fair electoral system which allows a high degree of political participation for the people of Hong Kong. The EU continued to support civil society in Hong Kong through regular contacts with human rights defenders, NGOs, and the media, and the organisation of human rights seminars and workshops.

Taiwan

The EU's engagement fits into a generally good human rights situation and domestic policy to implement international standards, with the exception of the death penalty. The EU deplored the five executions that took place in Taiwan in April, following previous rounds in 2013 and 2012, which breached the de facto moratorium observed from 2005 until 2010. In its statement, the EU called for an immediate moratorium on executions, as recommended by international experts in 2013.

The EU remained engaged with local authorities and civil society (support for the NGO Taiwan Alliance to End the Death Penalty through the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights) on working effectively towards the resumption of a moratorium on the death penalty with a view to its formal abolition. In its regular dialogue with Taiwan – the EU-Taiwan annual consultations on non-trade issues – the EU raised its concerns over the death penalty and its continued application.

Mongolia

The EU's objectives are to assist Mongolia in setting up an efficient and adequate legal framework to meet its international obligations, to support its effort in building a functioning democracy and to support social and economic development.

Human rights issues were raised with the Mongolian authorities at all levels. The main concerns regard the situation in prisons, law enforcement, discrimination against women, persons belonging to minorities and vulnerable groups, and growing corruption.

The EU-Mongolia Partnership and Cooperation Agreement, signed in 2013, contains a human rights clause and provides for reinforced cooperation on human rights. Preparations for launching a formal EU-Mongolia Human Rights Dialogue are under way. Since 2014 Mongolia has become a beneficiary country under the new special incentive arrangement for sustainable development and good governance scheme (GSP+), which is another useful mechanism to address concerns linked to the legal framework and implementation of the core international human rights conventions and protocols to which it has acceded.

The EU financed several EIDHR-funded civil society projects which focused on respect for human rights in Mongolian prisons, the protection of the rights of women and victims of human trafficking, strengthening the rights of people belonging to sexual minorities and their families, and human rights promotion through documentary films among young people. Development assistance for Mongolia for 2014–2020 was increased by 100 % reaching the level of EUR 65 million, with a focus on governance and education, looking for a positive impact on the human rights situation.

India

In 2014, EU priorities continued to be the protection of women and children, the quest for a moratorium on executions leading to abolition of the death penalty, the fight against all forms of discrimination, and human rights defenders.

On 16 January, the European Parliament adopted a resolution on recent moves to criminalise LGBTI people; the resolution referred to the Indian Supreme Court decision overturning a 2009 Delhi High Court ruling concerning a colonial-era law outlawing homosexuality. The European Parliament continued to express concern about the situation in India, raising in particular questions dedicated to the situation of women, the Christian minority, and the Indian Supreme Court exemplary recognition of the existence of a 'third gender'.

To promote gender equality and women's empowerment, in March the EU together with UN Women organised a conference entitled "Inspiring a change: Equality for all". Three projects under the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR) for a total of EUR 900 000 on promoting gender equality and women's rights in India were implemented in 2014 addressing the root causes of gender-based violence and discrimination at institutional, structural, ideological and operational levels and the consequences of gender-based violence and discrimination. Three additional projects totalling EUR 2.5 million were aimed at combating discrimination against girls/female infanticide.

As part of EU support for human rights defenders, a review meeting of the Human Rights Law Network addressing the human rights situation in "conflict states" focused on the contribution of the judiciary in the fight for social justice and respect for human rights. The local EU Human Rights Working Group continued to interact with human rights defenders' networks, including site visits. A project on freedom of information, expression and association online amounting to EUR 978 000 was implemented.

As regards the death penalty, the Indian Law Commission launched a public consultation in May to reassess the relevance of capital punishment. The EU Delegation invited Robert Badinter, spearhead of the movement for the abolition of the death penalty, to give lectures in India and hold discussions with the judiciary, the legal community, the National Human Rights Commission, civil society, parliamentarians and the media.

Indonesia

The EU closely followed the legislative elections in April and the presidential elections in July, which involved over 185 million registered voters, 470 000 polling stations and more than 700 million ballot papers. The elections were widely regarded as free, fair and professionally managed, and guaranteed the peaceful transfer of power to the new President, Joko Widodo.

In May, the EU-Indonesia Partnership and Cooperation Agreement entered into force. The PCA is based on shared values and includes joint commitments to the safeguarding and promotion of human rights.

The fifth session of the EU-Indonesia Human Rights Dialogue took place in Jakarta in November. It focused on torture prevention, the rights of persons with disabilities, the prevention of gender-based violence, as well as business and human rights. The dialogue also discussed freedom of religion, freedom of expression, the death penalty and cooperation in multilateral fora.

The EU Special Representative for Human Rights, Stavros Lambrinidis, delivered the keynote speech at the Jakarta Human Rights Dialogue on the abolition of the death penalty in the ASEAN region in November and engaged with members of the ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission for Human Rights, Indonesian and ASEAN government officials and civil society groups.

Throughout the year the EU paid close attention to freedom of religion and belief and the protection of persons belonging to minorities. The EU held regular meetings in Jakarta with minority groups, victims of intolerance and human rights organisations working on this issue.

No executions had been carried out by early December 2014 but statements from the Attorney General indicated that executions might be resumed before the end of the year. At least 14 people were sentenced to death in 2014 with a total of approximately 130 prisoners on death row. In conjunction with the World Day against the Death Penalty on 10 October, the EU Delegation launched a social media campaign promoting the abolition of the death penalty. In November Indonesia abstained at the vote on the UNGA resolution on a moratorium on the death penalty. The EU raised concerns with local authorities and the central government about the new bylaws passed in September on the implementation of sharia law in Aceh. Several provisions, including on same-sex relations and rape, potentially violate international human rights conventions ratified by Indonesia.

The EIDHR supported ten projects in 2014, covering a broad spectrum of issues, including elections, conflict resolution and mediation, freedom of religion, accountability for human rights violations, and the protection of vulnerable groups.

Japan

In 2014, the EU and Japan continued their regular and close cooperation on human rights issues, both in Asia and globally. They continued to be committed actors on human rights at the UN, actively participating in the work of the Human Rights Council and the UN General Assembly, including on resolutions on the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. The latest round of EU-Japan human rights consultations was held in November. Discussions focused on cooperation at the Human Rights Council and on the UNGA 69 Third Committee.

The EU pressed hard for action on the critically important issue of the death penalty in Japan, encouraging the government to put in place a moratorium on executions with a view to abolition and calling for an in-depth public debate. The year saw three executions. In public statements issued by the EU High Representative's spokesperson, the EU condemned the ongoing policy of carrying out executions (7 in 2012, 8 in 2013) following a period of nearly two years without executions until 2012. The EU's concerns were raised both publicly and in political dialogue. In this context, a number of recommendations aimed at improving the political and media impact of the EU's activities against the death penalty in Japan are now being implemented locally by the EU Delegation and EU Member States.

Within the umbrella of the EC's Industrial Policy Dialogue with Japan, a Working Group on Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) was established. A first meeting of the Working Group was held in July 2014. The meeting facilitated joint EC (DG GROW) – Japan (Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry) dialogue on responsible business conduct, identifying areas of joint interest and cooperation. A second Working Group on CSR is scheduled to be held in 2015.

Republic of Korea

Respect for universal principles of human rights is an essential element of the EU-Korea Framework Agreement, agreed along with the Free Trade Agreement and the declaration of a Strategic Partnership in 2010. Previous commitments, made at summit-level, to work together in promoting human rights were reiterated during meetings between the EU High Representative and the Republic of Korea Foreign Minister in 2014.

The EU and Republic of Korea cooperated closely in international human rights forums throughout the year. The voting patterns of the EU and Republic of Korea at the Human Rights Council (HRC) and UNGA Third Committee matched each other on almost all thematic and country-specific human rights resolutions with the exception of the resolution on a moratorium on the death penalty, on which the Republic of Korea abstained. The EU and Republic of Korea worked together to bring international attention to human rights abuses in the DPRK. Bilateral cooperation was an important element in passing HRC and UNGA Third Committee resolutions that reflected the recommendations of the UN Commission of Inquiry.

At the local level, the EU continued to cooperate with the Republic of Korea government and civil society groups working to strengthen the protection of human rights.

The EU noted positively the Republic of Korea government's maintenance of the de facto moratorium on the implementation of executions, which had existed since 1998. The EU encouraged the government to take measures to abolish capital punishment completely.

The EU participated in a high-level symposium organised by the Ministry of Justice on strengthening national frameworks to strengthen human rights policy. EU Heads of Mission met the Minister of Gender Equality and Family and agreed to expand information sharing on gender equality policies.

The EU continued to engage with stakeholders on follow-up measures to recommendations made at the second Universal Periodic Review, including ending the imprisonment of conscientious objectors to military service, arrangements for implementation of the National Security Law and ensuring the rights of persons belonging to minorities.

Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK)

Promoting respect and improvement of human rights in the DPRK remained at the core of the EU's policy towards the country. The EU continued to draw the attention of UN bodies to the grave human rights situation in the DPRK. It co-initiated a resolution in the Human Rights Council (adopted on 28 March) and one in the UN General Assembly's Third Committee (adopted on 18 November) that drew on the findings of the UN Commission of Inquiry (COI) established last year which reported on the systematic, widespread and gross human rights violations being committed in the country, which the COI has said may amount to crimes against humanity.

The resolution adopted by the UN General Assembly in December with strong cross-regional support broke new ground by encouraging the UN Security Council to take appropriate action, including through consideration of referral of the situation in the DPRK to the International Criminal Court, and consideration of the scope for effective targeted sanctions against those who appear to be most responsible for acts that the COI has said may constitute crimes against humanity. The EU continued to monitor the situation of DPRK refugees abroad, calling when necessary for the full respect of all relevant international obligations.

On 17 April, the European Parliament adopted a resolution on the situation in North Korea, reiterating its strong condemnation of state repression and calling once more on the DPRK to abide by its international human rights obligations.

The EU continued to provide assistance, mostly in the area of food security, to some of the most vulnerable groups in DPRK.

Laos

In 2014 the EU's objectives remained focused on the rule of law, the strengthening of the supervisory function of parliament and the development of civil society.

The EU continued to engage with Laos in various formats, including the annual human rights dialogue in May, and in the framework of the political dialogue, in particular the Joint Committee, which took place in October. The EU welcomed the information received on individual cases and on conditions in prisons. At the same time the EU repeated its utmost concern about the fate of Mr Sombath Somphone, and called for a credible investigation into his disappearance. Finally, the EU reiterated its pleas for further progress in making use of the Universal Periodic Review. Contrary to standard practice, agreement could not be reached on a joint statement at the end of the human rights dialogue.

During the year, the EU stepped up its dialogue with civil society organisations and with the authorities regarding, in particular, the space and working conditions for NGOs, in the context of draft restrictive regulations putting them under pressure. The EU also contributed financially to the hearing of NGOs, which Laos organised.

The European Parliament adopted an urgency resolution on 16 January 2014 regarding Laos. It focused on the case of Mr Sombath Somphone, but also highlighted the importance of the work of civil society. In the context of the ASEM summit chaired by the EU in Milan in October, the Asia-Europe People's Forum adopted a strongly-worded declaration concerning the disappearance of Mr Somphone.

In the framework of the EU's bilateral development cooperation with the government, EUR 2.7 million was allocated to support for Laos' Legal Sector Master Plan and National Governance Public Administration Reform.

With regard to civil society, the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights provided support for over twenty projects in Laos addressing issues ranging from the rights of children, women and persons with disabilities, to the rights to food and access to legal information of local communities, with a total EU contribution of EUR 3 million. Around 10 projects empowering civil society were ongoing in 2014 under the Non State Actors Thematic Programme, for a total amount of EUR 6.5 million.

Malaysia

The EU's main human rights priorities in Malaysia in 2014 were the promotion of the abolition of the death penalty and the ratification of the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (ICC). The EU continued to provide support to the EU citizens on death row in Malaysia.

Negotiations towards an EU-Malaysia Partnership and Cooperation Agreement (PCA) resumed in 2014 with two rounds held in April and December respectively. The draft agreement contains a human rights clause.

In April, the EU delivered a demarche to promote the universality and implementation of the Rome Statute to the Attorney General of Malaysia, followed by a visit by the Attorney General to Brussels for a meeting with the EEAS on the International Criminal Court.

Throughout the year, the EU's local Human Rights Working Group engaged with civil society organisations working on freedom of religion, LGTBI rights, police shootings and deaths in custody, as well as migrant workers and asylum seekers' rights.

On 2-3 July, the EU co-organised the Consultation on the Promotion and Protection of the Freedom of Religion or Belief in ASEAN with the Global Movement of Moderates and PROHAM. The EU sponsored the participation of Professor Dr. Harry Harun Behr of the German Islamic Conference, who provided a European perspective on the freedom of religion or belief, as well as a critical view in regard to conservative and restrictive interpretations of Islam.

In conjunction with the EU/World Day against the Death Penalty, the EU Delegation, the Bar Council of Malaysia, the National Human Rights Commission, the U.K. High Commission, Amnesty International Malaysia, the Embassy of Switzerland and the Chinese Assembly Hall organised a week-long campaign on the abolition of the death penalty from 6-12 October under the title "Give Life a Second Chance". An art exhibition was held at one of the largest shopping centres in Kuala Lumpur featuring photographs by artist Toshi Kazama, who delivered presentations in universities. The EU Delegation and its partners engaged on the death penalty with federal and state-level senior politicians. The campaign received significant media coverage. A social media campaign ran from 1-12 October on the EU, Member States and co-organisers' social media channels.

In November, the EU and Member States co-organised the "Forum on the state of indigenous communities in the State of Sarawak and their rights" in partnership with the Pesticide Action Network Asia Pacific and the Sarawak Dayak Iban Associations (SADIA).

EU Member States engaged in Malaysia's second Universal Periodic Review, which took place in March in Geneva. Malaysia accepted 150 of the 232 recommendations made. However a great number of these were accepted only partially or "in principle", with no commitments taken towards a moratorium on the death penalty nor on the ratification of core UN human rights conventions or the withdrawal of reservations made to them.

The EU supported Humana Child Aid Society's project on the education of stateless children in the state of Sabah with the amount of EUR 600 000 under the global Migration & Asylum programme. The project was completed in August 2014.

Maldives

In 2014, the EU continued to express concerns about the human rights situation, including the safety of civil society and the media in the electoral and post-electoral context.

The parliamentary elections of 22 March were assessed by the EU election observation mission as well administered despite the interference by the Supreme Court and its actions against the Electoral Commission in the weeks leading up to the general elections. The EU followed closely the post-electoral situation, given concerns about the future of democratic consolidation and threats to opposition party members.

On 30 April, the EU High Representative expressed in a public statement the EU's concerns about the recent 'activation' of the death penalty through the adoption of implementing legislation and procurement of lethal injections material.

Throughout the year, the EU continued its dialogue with civil society organisations and other key stakeholders. In September, the EU issued a joint local statement on threats to civil society and human rights in the Maldives, in a context marked by the rise of Islamic extremism in remote islands of the country and restrictions to the freedom of expression, notably through intimidation and threats to journalists.

Nepal

After the successful Constituent Assembly elections in November 2013, the EU focused its attention in 2014 on monitoring the constitution-writing process and the introduction of transitional justice legislation. The EU continued its engagement towards consolidating the peace process, addressing human rights concerns such as impunity, discrimination, and accountability of public finances. In support of the constitution-writing process, the ambassadors of the EU and resident member states, together with Switzerland and Norway, issued a local statement calling on Nepal's political leaders to meet their 22 January 2015 deadline.

Providing transitional justice for human rights abuses during the civil war was one of the key commitments in the peace process. The government passed legislation on transitional justice in May 2014. The act establishes two commissions, one on enforced disappearances and the other on truth and reconciliation. The commissions have the discretion to recommend amnesty except for cases of rape. Conflict victims and human rights NGOs are critical of the new legislation. In their regular contacts and meetings with the Nepalese authorities, the EU representatives expressed that serious human rights violations cannot be subject to amnesty and that transitional justice mechanisms have to comply with international standards.

Caste-based discrimination and gender-based violence and discrimination were addressed through engagement with the government on the commitments it had made at the Universal Periodic Review in 2011, as well as through continuous support granted to civil society projects targeting marginalised groups and communities. But examples remain of areas for further engagement: the LGBTI community still fears persecution and the draft criminal code legislation does not match progressive rulings on LGBTI rights in the Supreme Court; people from the Terai claim lack of access to governance structures and excessive use of force including extra judicial killings; and there are fears that the draft Constitution does not set out adequate protections for full religious freedom.

The EU continued its support for the implementation of the National Action Plan on UNSCRs 1325 and 1820 on women, peace and security and violence against women through funding via the Nepal Peace Trust Fund. The Peace Support Working Group, in which the EU participates as a member, worked on the inclusion of conflict victims of sexual and gender-based violence into the government's definition of conflict-affected persons and their access to relief, rehabilitation and reparation services.

The EU engaged on the situation of human rights defenders as Chair, until spring 2014, of the EU Working Group for the protection of human rights defenders as well as through support for civil society projects.

Pakistan

The main EU objectives on human rights and democracy are the strengthening of the electoral framework, the capacity building of the National Assembly and Provincial Assemblies, freedom of religion or belief, rights of women, access to justice and action against the death penalty. The EU also remained active on the freedom of expression and the safety of journalists, children's rights and labour rights, including in the context of the special incentive arrangement for sustainable development and good governance (GSP+).

The EU continued to engage on human rights and democracy in various formats. The Sub-Group on Human Rights held on 23 June in Islamabad addressed democracy and elections, freedom of expression, gender equality, the death penalty, GSP+, and multilateral issues. The EU and Pakistan agreed to establish an enhanced human rights dialogue at local level, which will complement the existing sub-group. The EU also announced that it would transmit a list of individual cases on which further information would be welcome. The list was forwarded in early September and will be discussed in future dialogue meetings.

Progress on tackling impunity and on addressing challenges surrounding the rule of law and access to justice was lacking in Pakistan. Other institutional weaknesses included limited accountability by law enforcement agencies, with reports of extra-judicial killings, disappearances, torture, overcrowded prisons and illegal detention. The EU consistently raised these issues with the government. The EU also met with the families of disappeared persons.

The Protection of Pakistan Ordinance adopted in October 2013 was due to expire in 2014. Parliament enacted new provisions in July. The EU monitored the text closely with the assistance of legal professionals and conveyed its concerns regarding different areas of human rights affected by provisions of the draft. Despite the amendment of certain provisions, the Protection of Pakistan Citizens' Act remains problematic.

Many persons belonging to religious minorities in Pakistan still lived in fear of religious persecution and sectarian violence. While Shias were the group most frequently targeted in sectarian attacks, the already difficult situation for Christians, Ahmadis, and Hindus deteriorated further during 2014. The EU constantly urged the government to ensure better protection of people belonging to minorities, end impunity for violence against them and take action against those inciting religious hatred. The EU also monitored and raised concerns about individual cases, including that of Asia Bibi, whose guilty verdict was confirmed by the Court of Appeal in Lahore in October.

Pakistan continues to maintain a moratorium on the death penalty, but indications surfaced towards the end of the year that the government was considering changing its policy to resume execution of terrorists. In this context the EU reiterated its strong and principled opposition to the use of the death penalty for any crime and expressed its grave concern over these reports.

The situation of women in Pakistan also continued to be difficult with frequent cases of family violence, honour killings, rape and forced marriages and conversions reported from all over the country. The need for advancement of women in society was repeatedly stressed by the EU in the course of the bilateral dialogues.

While Pakistan has acceded to most of the core international human rights instruments, progress is still needed on incorporating these into domestic law and on implementing measures to achieve their objectives. In 2014, Pakistan was granted preferential access to the EU market under the GSP+ trade regime. Repeated appeals for action and implementation were issued by the EU throughout the year in bilateral dialogues, including during the Joint Commission and a visit of EUSR Lambrinidis.

The EU issued a number of statements on key human rights issues and concerns during the year, notably on the safety of journalists, on the murder of a prominent lawyer and human rights defender, on the June terrorist attack against Karachi Airport, on violence against women and on the political demonstrations that took place in August. In October, the EU issued a statement on the Lahore High Court decision to uphold the conviction of Ms Asia Bibi, and in November, a statement on the terrorist attack close to the Wagah border crossing. The EU High Representative conveyed her heartfelt condolences and support to the people and authorities of Pakistan on the day of the tragic attack on a school in Peshawar in December.

Stavros Lambrinidis, the EU Special Representative for Human Rights, paid an official visit in November. EUSR Lambrinidis raised all key human rights concerns with senior government ministers and members of parliament at national and province level. The EUSR also engaged with a broad cross-section of Pakistani civil society, including women's rights leaders, prominent lawyers and journalists, religious leaders, representatives of the business community, trade union representatives and artists. The EUSR welcomed Pakistan's ratification of human rights conventions and the adoption of progressive laws, while also in the context of GSP+ encouraging further concrete and effective implementation of key priority actions before the review of the scheme, and underlining the EU's readiness to provide support. Individual cases, including that of Asia Bibi, were raised at ministerial and other levels.

The European Parliament adopted four resolutions in 2014, related to Pakistan's regional role and political relations with the EU, recent cases of persecution, the death penalty, and the blasphemy laws.

The EU used its development portfolio to support democratic institutions, the rule of law, women's and children's rights and freedom of religion or belief. It continued its cooperation with law enforcement agencies, to improve their professionalism, accountability and community focus, including through mechanisms for effective protection of human rights. EU support for the federal parliament (National Assembly and Senate) continued, and was extended to the Election Commission. Considerable EU support for education in two provinces also contributed to strengthening children's rights and fostering a culture of tolerance.

A large project on promoting freedom of religion or belief began in February and new projects on women's rights and women's empowerment were selected under EIDHR with a total allocation of almost EUR 1.1 million. Selected projects focus on survivors of acid crimes, women suffering from exclusion due to severe medical conditions, referral systems for survivors and prevention of violence against women, and women's skills development. A number of awareness raising activities on the EU human rights guidelines and civil society's role in implementation of GSP+ were also supported through EIDHR.

Philippines

The EU objectives on human rights and democracy are support for human rights defenders, justice sector reform, the fight against impunity for extra-judicial killings and enforced disappearances, the improvement of economic, social and cultural rights, and support for children affected by armed conflict.

The EU continued to engage with the relevant interlocutors, including the national and regional Commissions on Human Rights (CHR), state actors (Department of Justice, Department of Interior and local governments), human rights defenders and civil society. The EU-Philippines Partnership and Cooperation Agreement signed in 2012 calls, inter alia, for the establishment of a meaningful human rights dialogue in the form of a Working Group on Human Rights. Pending the ratification of this agreement, human rights are discussed under the framework of the periodic meetings of senior officials, whose next session is scheduled for 2015 in Manila.

In its regular political dialogue with the Philippine authorities, the EU repeatedly recalled the need to address more systematically the issue of impunity, and bring the perpetrators of gross human rights violations to justice.

In anticipation of the plebiscite in Bangsamoro, in 2014 the EU was invited to send its election observation mission to Mindanao in 2015.

Under the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR), in November the EU launched a local call for proposals with a budget of EUR 1.8 million. Selected projects will focus on the protection of human rights defenders and groups threatened by extra-judicial killings, torture or others of the worst forms of human right violations, the protection of the rights of children affected by armed conflict, and the promotion of the people's rights to well-informed free, democratic and transparent plebiscite and elections in the future Bangsamoro territory.

The EU continued providing financial support through the Development Cooperation Instrument (DCI) and the Instrument for Stability (IfS) in the following areas: "Justice for All" programme, aimed at enhancing access to justice and fighting impunity; capacity building of the Regional Human Rights Commission in the Autonomous Region in Mindanao; protection of economic, social and cultural rights of the population, focusing on poverty alleviation, human and social development, and good governance.

Singapore

The EU's activities in 2014 consisted in monitoring and reporting, delivering démarches, coordinating closely with Member States, and organising meetings, dialogues and events to address the main human rights issues such as the death penalty, discrimination of LGBTI people, and freedom of expression.

The EU welcomed the fact that on 3 November Singapore's Parliament passed the Prevention of Human Trafficking Act, which took into account recommendations from NGOs. The Prevention of Human Trafficking Act 2014 is a landmark law for Singapore, a city particularly vulnerable to human trafficking as a destination country given its economic stature and strategic location. The new law will bring Singapore more closely in line with international standards and may bolster efforts to combat human trafficking in the region.

The EU had previously welcomed the 2012/2013 reform of Singapore's mandatory death penalty regime, whereby the death penalty was restricted to murder with intent, firearms offences and trafficking in illicit drugs above a quantitative threshold. However, executions resumed on 18 July 2014. In a public statement, the EU appealed for a moratorium on executions.

During the course of 2014, several events were organised by the EU Delegation and Member States' Embassies. For instance, the British High Commission organised events on the occasion of IDAHO Day, in connection with the LGBT Pink Dot gathering and on the International Day of Persons with Disabilities.

In the run up to the World Day against the Death Penalty, the EU organised a panel discussion. For the first time in Singapore, it was possible to hold such an event outside the EU Delegation premises, in this case at the National University of Singapore. Panellists included a local criminal defence lawyer, an anti-death penalty activist and a professor of criminal law. The audience consisted of legal practitioners, academics and students as well as EU Political Counsellors and diplomats from like-minded countries.

The annual Human Rights Day Seminar was dedicated to "The Role of the Judiciary in the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights". The Seminar featured a presentation on international human rights law and national courts in Asia, as well as three dedicated panels covering: "human rights in constitutional, civil, and family law", "safeguarding human rights in criminal law and justice", and "access to justice and legal aid". In addition to an extensive discussion on the role of the judiciary in Singapore and Asia, the 2014 Seminar also created space for discussion and debate on LGBTI rights in Singapore.

Sri Lanka

The 1995 Cooperation Agreement on Partnership and Development provides the basis for the EU's cooperation with Sri Lanka. In 2014, it proved impossible to convene any formalised dialogue with the Sri Lankan authorities, whilst concerns for the human rights and security situation grew.

In its conclusions of 21 March, the European Council recalled its commitment to accountability, reconciliation and universal human rights in Sri Lanka. It also called for the adoption of a resolution on Sri Lanka at the UN Human Rights Council that would provide for an international investigation into alleged war crimes by both sides during the war.

At the 25th session of the United Nations Human Rights Council in March, the EU Member States co-sponsored with the US a resolution urging the government of Sri Lanka to make progress on reconciliation and to conduct investigations into alleged violations of international human rights and humanitarian law. The resolution also mandated the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights to undertake a comprehensive investigation into alleged serious violations and abuses of human rights and related crimes by both parties in Sri Lanka. Like other international partners, the EU called upon the government to fully cooperate with the investigation and to address accountability issues as an important step for fostering genuine reconciliation.

The EU issued several statements, inter alia on the attacks against the Muslim Community (20 June), the appointment of the UN investigation team for Sri Lanka (1 July), and restrictions on non-governmental organisations and on freedom of expression (23 July), in a context of worrying developments such as increased harassment and detention of human rights defenders under the Prevention of Terrorism Act, restrictions on the activities of non-governmental organisations, attacks against religious minorities, electoral violence, gender-based and sexual violence, as well as the detention and deportation of refugees and asylum-seekers.

Throughout the year, the EU maintained a constant dialogue with civil society organisations.

The EU provided financial support to Sri Lanka through the EU Support to District Development Programme (SDDP), focusing on conflict affected areas, and through the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR).

Thailand

The EU issued several statements before the military take-over calling for a political solution and for restraint. Following the military take-over on 22 May, the EU Foreign Affairs Council in its June conclusions expressed its extreme concern, stated that respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms must be upheld, and urged military authorities to free all political detainees, to refrain from any further arrests for political reasons and to remove censorship. The EU also announced that it was forced to reconsider its engagement.

In its dialogue with the Thai authorities since 22 May, the EU has systematically reiterated its pleas for martial law to be lifted and the freedoms of speech, media and assembly to be restored, highlighted the need for public participation in political reform processes and urged the authorities to stop using martial courts to try civilians.

In the course of the year, the EU substantially increased its focus on human rights and stepped up its dialogue with civil society organisations. The EU Delegation organised regular consultations with civil society organisations to assess the situation of human rights defenders after the military take-over. The EU Delegation and representatives of several EU Member States twice visited northern provinces to gain updates on the political and human rights situation and conveyed concerns about the human rights situation to local authorities. The EU Delegation met detained students and ensured diplomatic observation of key trials.

The EU, in a local statement issued on 14 November, expressed concern about the misuse of the criminal defamation law in Thailand against human rights defenders and journalists to silence freedom of expression and investigative journalism.

On 10 October, on the occasion of the World Day against the Death Penalty, the EU in cooperation with Amnesty International Thailand organised a public screening of a documentary to advocate against the use of the death penalty.

In mid-November, the Delegation visited two Southern provinces, which have been faced with a low-intensity insurgency for over a decade, to learn about the situation there.

As regards development cooperation, the EU provided substantial support to civil society organisations in the framework of the 'Non-State-Actor and Local Authority Programme' as well as under its 'Aid to Uprooted People' programme.

A further EUR 125 000 was granted recently to provide humanitarian assistance to Rohingya and Bangladeshi migrants held in immigration detention centres (men) and social welfare facilities (women and children). This brings the total EU assistance to these detainees to EUR 325 000 since June 2013. The project is implemented by the International Organisation for Migration.

The EU also provided financial support to two universities to organise a public forum on human rights to mark the International Human Rights Day on 10 December.

Timor-Leste

The EU fully supported Timor-Leste in its drive towards the establishment of a stable democracy. The EU and the government of Timor-Leste held their second enhanced political dialogue under Article 8 of the Cotonou Agreement in October in Brussels. The agenda included human rights, the rule of law and democratic governance, as well as regional integration and foreign affairs. The dialogue resulted in joint commitments including the engagement in a dialogue led by the EU Delegation in Dili to deepen cooperation on consolidating democracy in Timor-Leste. As part of the commitments, a thorough analysis of the separation of powers will be conducted. Other issues of EU engagement and interest include violence against women, especially domestic violence, the rights of people with disabilities, governance, including tackling the phenomena of clientelism and corruption.

In total, the current portfolio of human rights and democracy projects under implementation in Timor-Leste amounts to some EUR 10 million.

Two very important projects were carried out in 2014 in Timor-Leste. One project under the EIDHR for EUR 20 000 is seeking to develop a Democracy Profile for Timor-Leste within the framework of the EU Strategic Framework and Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy. The other project that is funded under the Instrument Contributing to Peace and Stability (IfS) has the objective of promoting accountability for past human rights violations as a critical part of building a more sustainable peace and ensure non-recurrence of serious violations. Nearly EUR 50 000 was committed towards this project.

Vietnam

Respect for and promotion of democratic principles and human and fundamental rights at work constitute an essential element of the EU-Vietnam Partnership and Cooperation Agreement (PCA) signed in June 2012. The EU's main concerns include civil and political rights, specifically the freedoms of expression, of the media and of religion or belief, as well as the application of the death penalty. In the framework of the advanced implementation of the PCA, the EU and Vietnam in October held the preparatory meeting for the fourth round of the enhanced human rights dialogue due to take place in January 2015 in Brussels.

Human rights were mainstreamed throughout the year during high-level bilateral visits. In particular, human rights were raised at the highest level when President Barroso visited Vietnam and during Prime Minister Dung's visit to Brussels, where he met Presidents Van Rompuy, Barroso and Schulz. The ninth EU-Vietnam Joint Commission and the third round of high-level political consultations, both held in March, also provided the opportunity to address human rights concerns. Through the preparatory contacts for the human rights dialogue, public statements and discreet diplomacy, the EU urged the government to remove restrictions on freedom of expression and the media, requested prison visits and trial observation and called for the liberation, on humanitarian grounds, of several imprisoned activists who were in poor health. The EU has made public statements regarding trials against human rights activists, the application of the death penalty and the release of several persons of concern.

Furthermore, in its regular political dialogue, the EU repeatedly expressed its concerns about the arrest and sentencing of a number of activists and bloggers and reiterated its calls for the release of all imprisoned peaceful advocates of human rights in the country. The EU's list of persons of concern was regularly updated and shared with the authorities. The release in April of the activist Mr Trung, who was on this list and had been visited in prison by the EU Head of Delegation in July 2013, was a tangible result of the EU's efforts. Unfortunately, in 2014, requests to visit persons of concern in prison were not accepted by the authorities. The EU also met with the Ministry of Public Security to express its concern about the harassment and violence directed against human rights activists attempting to attend human rights events organised by the international community. The European Parliament adopted a resolution on 17 April on the negotiations for the EU-Vietnam Free Trade Agreement, which includes several references to human rights, including core labour rights.

The EU regularly met with human rights defenders and civil society organisations, and carried out field visits and trial observations on two occasions. It also monitored developments in relation to freedom of religion or belief, which remained a concern (notably persecution of non-recognised religious groups and destruction of their property) although gradual improvement was noted on the registration of churches. EU representatives met with religious leaders from different denominations on several occasions.

In 2014, Vietnam underwent its second Universal Periodic Review in Geneva. While acknowledging positive steps taken by the government of Vietnam since the first UPR cycle, many delegations (including EU Member States) highlighted the need for improvements regarding e.g. freedom of expression and the media, space for civil society, the death penalty, etc. Vietnam participated constructively in the exercise, accepted 182 of the 227 recommendations received, and by year end was working on an action plan for their implementation. The EU played an active role in the UPR process and its follow-up and offered support to Vietnam in implementing the recommendations it had accepted.

Vietnam is still to make its mark in the promotion of human rights domestically and at international level as a member of the United Nations Human Rights Council since November 2013 (for the 2014-2016 term).

The EU continued to support the modernisation of the judicial system, *inter alia* as regards access to justice, with a contribution of EUR 8 million to the Justice Partnership Programme, a joint donor initiative involving the EU, Denmark and Sweden. The project supports key institutions such as the Ministry of Justice, the Supreme People's Court, the Supreme People's Procuracy and the Bar Association, and includes training for judges, lawyers and other law professionals. Governance and rule of law is also a focal sector of the EU's Multiannual Indicative Programme 2014-2020 adopted in August.

The EIDHR supported seven projects covering a broad range of issues, including empowering people with HIV and populations at higher risk of HIV infection, the rights of persons with disabilities, support for civil society organisation networks, the rights of persons belonging to ethnic minorities, workers' rights and labour relations. In the framework of the Strategic Dialogue Facility, the EU also supported activities in the areas of anti-corruption, rights of persons belonging to ethnic minorities, freedom of religion or belief, governance and migration. In July the EU Delegation and EU Member States' Embassies adopted the EU Roadmap for Engagement with Civil Society Organizations.

VIII Oceania

Australia

The EU engaged with Australia on its regional processing arrangements for asylum in the annual Senior Officials' Dialogue on Migration in Brussels on 12 November, against the background of the policy that has been implemented over recent years and criticised by the UNHCR, human rights organisations and opposition political parties. On 28 November, the UN Committee against Torture released its report on Australia, highlighting concerns about the treatment and detention of asylum seekers, the over-representation of indigenous peoples in juvenile and adult prisons, and the country's new counter-terrorism legislation.

A new EU-Australia Framework Agreement, currently in the final stages of negotiation, will provide opportunities to further enhance dialogue and cooperation on human rights issues, based on Australia's strong record in protecting civil and political rights and as partners in promoting the multilateral human rights agenda.

Fiji

On 17 September, Fiji held its first democratic elections since the 2006 coup. The EU dispatched a EU Electoral Experts Mission (EEM), whose recommendations will be provided to the Fijian authorities. Fiji's democratic transition was welcomed in EU statements.

Following the elections, on the basis of the assessment of the EEM and the outcomes of the EU verification mission carried out in the context of Article 96 of the Cotonou Partnership Agreement, the EU Member States agreed that the measures suspending development cooperation with the government should be discontinued, whilst ensuring continued close monitoring and support in the area of human rights by means including political dialogue and EU financial assistance.

During 2014, the EU continued to support Fiji's return to democracy by providing assistance to the electoral management bodies and to the new Parliament.

In October, Fiji underwent its second Universal Periodic Review in Geneva. The EU engaged with local stakeholders in the run up to the review.

The ILO *direct contacts mission* finally completed its assignment in Fiji in October 2014. It met the tripartite partners and carried out its assessment of the state of freedom of association in time for the ILO Governing Body meeting in November 2014. At the end of the mission, a tripartite Memorandum of Understanding was signed by the social partners but not by the Minister of Labour. The EU submitted its comments to the ILO Governing Body. The decision on the establishment of a Commission of Inquiry concerning non-observance by Fiji of the Freedom of Association ILO Convention, 1948 (n.87) has been postponed to the ILO March 2015 Governing Body.

In 2014, Fiji was selected as one of the pilot countries under the EU's Agenda for Action on Democracy Support. The country will be monitored and assisted on its democratisation path. The EU stepped up its dialogue with civil society organisations and drew up a national roadmap for engagement with civil society. Support to civil society in the field of civic education, democracy and the rule of law continued through the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights, which made a total of EUR 600 000 available for the purpose. Particularly successful was the funding granted to civil society to provide training related to the different stages of return to democracy, with particular focus on women, youth, rural and marginalised communities who are traditionally less engaged in political life.

New Zealand

Negotiations on an EU-New Zealand Partnership Agreement on Relations and Cooperation were concluded in 2014 (the agreement is to be initialled in early 2015). This will, among other things, provide opportunities to further enhance dialogue and step up cooperation on human rights issues.

Ahead of New Zealand's second Universal Periodic Review, the EU had carried out extensive exchanges with the New Zealand Human Rights Commission on the current state of human rights in the country. The government accepted 121 recommendations and rejected 34. The government recognised the need to strengthen the partnership with the Maori, to improve the protection of children against abuse and neglect, reduce violence within families and its impact on women and children, and ensure that human rights impacts of the Canterbury Earthquake are accounted for. The EU and New Zealand held regular human rights consultations in international fora, including at the UN in New York and Geneva, and in specific countries in the Asia-Pacific region and across the world.

In 2014, the EU and New Zealand cooperated in the Multinational Observer Group (MOG) for the Fiji elections. The elections went well and were technically sound, leading to a favourable conclusion by the Multinational Observer Group.

Papua New-Guinea

The main EU priorities on human rights and democracy include: the improvement of the situation regarding gender-based violence, which is highly prevalent in the country; the death penalty, as recent legislation increases the number of crimes that are subject to it; and democratic governance as a whole, including rule of law and the problem of corruption.

The EU has engaged throughout 2014 in a number of ways. The first ever PNG-EU Enhanced Political Dialogue was held on 6 May in Port Moresby. Mainstreaming of governance and gender issues was ensured in cooperation projects and human rights concerns were raised through a continuous dialogue with authorities and partners.

The EU is supporting an innovative approach to promote democracy and governance by enhancing interaction between the Parliament and citizens through an EIDHR project called the 'Open Parliament'. The project supports the National Parliament in building the Parliament's technological capacity for outreach, information and communication. Other initiatives carried out in 2014 include ECHO and EIDHR financed civil society projects on violence against women and in support of human rights defenders. Through the EIDHR, disbursements of EUR 780 000 were made to projects run by CSOs.

Samoa

Gender-based violence and discrimination against women in Samoa remained of major concern to the EU in 2014. Through political dialogue and its financial instruments, the EU engaged in supporting the development of the recent bill on women's political participation, which guarantees women a minimum of 10 % of the seats in Parliament. The political commitments for this bill were taken at the 2013 Pacific Islands Forum by the Prime Minister together with other Pacific leaders. The EU cooperated with the government, regional organisations, civil society and other donors on awareness raising and support to civil society and non-state actors. NGOs were also funded with the aim of strengthening their voice and watchdog role.

The EU followed closely the activities of the new Human Rights Commission, opened on 10 December 2013 as an extension of the Samoan Ombudsman's Office. The Human Rights Commission was active in 2014 in promoting a free press, as well as in carrying out investigations into alleged abuses at the national prison. The investigations resulted in the resignation of several police officers and in the dismissal of the Police Commissioner.

Samoa's efforts and capacity to ratify a number of UN Human Rights Conventions and the Rome Statute continued to be supported in 2014 through the EU-PIF (Pacific Islands Forum) regional EIDHR project on Human Rights.

**Small Pacific Island States – Kiribati, Republic of the Marshall Islands,
Federated States of Micronesia, Nauru, Palau, Tonga, Tuvalu, Cook Islands, Niue**

The EU continued to promote human rights and gender equality throughout the year. The High Representative discussed human rights issues with the Pacific leaders at the Pacific Islands Forum's meeting in Palau. The presentation of credentials by the new EU Head of Delegation to several Pacific Island states and territories, including Nauru, Niue and the Cook Islands, provided another opportunity to raise human rights and gender issues. The EU also worked with regional organisations, civil society and other donors to strengthen the protection of human rights.

The EU carried out demarches and outreach activities inviting small Pacific Island States to support EU human rights initiatives and priorities at the UN level: the resolution on a moratorium on the death penalty, the resolution on the freedom of religion and belief, as well as country specific resolutions. The EU closely monitored the attempts to introduce the death penalty in Kiribati and the conditions of refugees in Nauru. Palau decriminalised homosexuality in July 2014.

The EU prepared a draft regional roadmap for civil society organisations (CSOs) in the Pacific, with the purpose of ensuring a more structured and effective dialogue with them as well as to intensify the linkages between CSOs, local authorities and the government.

The EU-PIF (Pacific Islands Forum) regional EIDHR project on human rights, focused on the Pacific Island States' ratification and implementation of international human rights treaties, continued to add value to the Forum Island Countries' (FICs) efforts to reduce poverty, improve gender equality and improve the political and social conditions for stability and safety. The project, which benefitted Fiji, PNG, Samoa, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu besides the Small Pacific Island States listed in the heading above, has also managed to increase the FICs' awareness of how to meet their human rights treaty obligations. With policy guidance and technical assistance provided by the Forum Secretariat, the Secretariat of the Pacific Community's Regional Rights Resource Team and the OHCHR, the FICs made efforts to complete and submit outstanding country reports for 2014. They also made efforts to facilitate legislative reviews in order to ensure compliance with international norms and standards, appointed several human rights officers to support national human rights efforts and revived and/or established national human rights coordinating committees. The EU-PIF Project on Human Rights has also provided Members of Parliament in the Pacific with the opportunity to understand human rights in the region, by examining emerging trends, advances and challenges. More importantly, the project has allowed MPs to understand the use and application of human rights norms and standards in policy and legislation, and thereby also the domestication of human rights laws in their country. It has also helped FICs to fully participate in the Universal Periodic Review as well as to engage with the UN treaty bodies.

Solomon Islands

The main objectives supported by the EU are to improve the transparency and integrity of the electoral process, to foster women's political participation and representation in political life and institutions, to promote women's rights, and to strengthen non-State actors' and citizens' capacity for democratic participation.

The EU continued to engage in human rights and democracy discussions with senior staff of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and of the Ministry of Women, Youth, Children and Family Affairs, the Ombudsman, and representatives of civil society organisations such as Save the Children, Family Support Centre, UNICEF, Development Services Exchange, Live and Learn, ADRA, World Vision, the International Labour Organization, the Chamber of Commerce and Industry, as well as business associations.

In its regular political dialogue, the EU reiterated its pleas for the ratification of the Rome Statute. The Fifth Solomon Islands/EU Enhanced Political Dialogue took place on 9 May in Honiara. The EU High Representative welcomed the peaceful conduct of the 19 November Parliamentary elections as an important milestone for the achievement of democratisation, good governance and human rights since the deployment of the Regional Assistance Mission to the Solomon Islands in 2003. The elections also confirm the return to stability and progress in the Solomon Islands. The EU supported the Electoral Commission through the project 'Strengthening the Electoral Cycle in the Solomon Islands' (EUR 3.5 million) together with Australian and UNDP funding. Upon request from the Solomon Islands authorities, the EU provided technical assistance for the legal drafting of the *Political Parties Integrity Act* regulations. This support, highly appreciated by the Cabinet of the Prime Minister, allowed for the implementation of these regulations and the creation of political parties in time for the elections.

Under the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights, the EU in December launched a EUR 600 000 call for proposals targeting the protection of children against sexual exploitation and sexual abuse. The EU continued providing financial support to the "Strongim Mere" project implemented by *UN Women* in the areas of women's empowerment and participation in politics. Funding was also granted to local NGOs to contribute to the empowerment of registered voters to make informed choices during the elections.

Vanuatu

The main EU objectives on human rights and democracy are the prevention of torture, the fight against corruption, political participation, and the development of civil society.

In its regular political dialogue, the EU has reiterated its pleas to promote gender equality and women's empowerment, and to fight gender based – and sexual – violence, as well as violence against children. The Third Vanuatu/EU Enhanced Political Dialogue took place in Port Vila on 30 October.

In 2014, Vanuatu underwent its Universal Periodic Review. Delegations, including EU Member States, noted positive developments such as: the free and fair elections held in 2012; the appointment in February 2013 of an interim national human rights committee; the accession to the Convention against Torture, the Rome Statute of the ICC, the Convention on the rights of persons with disabilities and the UN Convention against Corruption; measures taken to promote gender equality and women's participation in municipal councils; the establishment of Family Protection Units; and the "No Drop" Policy concerning sexual offences and domestic violence.

IX The Americas

Canada

The EU's objectives on human rights and democracy in the framework of its relations with Canada are specially directed to strengthening cooperation on human rights initiatives in third countries. During 2014, Canada participated in the EU Election Observation Missions to Egypt and Tunisia. The EU also devoted attention to the situation of refugees and of indigenous peoples in Canada, which the EU Delegation in Ottawa discussed with UNHCR and with local stakeholders. In 2014, the EU and Canada continued their close cooperation and consultation in UN human rights fora such as the UN Human Rights Council (HRC) and the UNGA Third Committee. Canada co-sponsored EU-led or co-led resolutions on Myanmar/Burma, the rights of the child and freedom of religion or belief. Similarly, the EU supported resolutions sponsored by Canada on Iran and on child, early and forced marriage. Canada supported but did not co-sponsor the UNGA resolution on a moratorium on the use of the death penalty. Regular contacts with Canada on human rights-related issues also took place in Brussels and Ottawa. Furthermore, the EU-Canada Summit on 26 September reaffirmed the shared commitment to work together to promote human rights, democracy and the rule of law.

The EU also stepped up its dialogue with Canadian civil society organisations. In this context, the EU Delegation to Canada met with Aboriginal organisations and with Amnesty International. A report on the human rights situation of indigenous peoples in Canada, prepared by the former Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, James Anaya, was submitted to the HRC in its 27th session. The EU, which supports the work of the Special Rapporteur, attended the discussions.

United States of America (USA)

The EU's objectives on human rights and democracy in the framework of its relations with the USA concern in particular the death penalty, aspects of the fight against terrorism, the ratification by the USA of international human rights instruments, and strengthening cooperation with the USA in multilateral human rights fora. The EU-US Summit in March reaffirmed the shared values of democracy, individual freedom, respect for the rule of law and human rights, and expressed concerns about the human rights situations in countries such as Syria and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK).

The EU and the USA continued to cooperate closely and regularly on human rights-related issues throughout 2014. They worked together in the UN Human Rights Council and the UNGA Third Committee in support of country resolutions on Syria and Iran. The USA supported EU-led or co-led initiatives on Myanmar/Burma and the DPRK, and on freedom of religion or belief, in both fora, while the EU supported USA-led resolutions on Sri Lanka and on the role of the UN in enhancing periodic and genuine elections and the promotion of democratisation. Technical contacts and cooperation on human rights and democracy-related issues took place regularly in Brussels and Washington DC, as well as between respective Missions in the field.

Human rights-related issues were discussed in the framework of other regular bilateral dialogues held in 2014 such as the Justice and Home Affairs Ministerial and Senior Official Meetings (personal data protection, and the respective rights' agendas of the EU and US), the Informal Legal Advisers' Dialogue on Counter-Terrorism and International Law (Guantánamo, extraterritorial application of human rights treaties, different treatment of US and non-US citizens with regard to privacy and data protection), the cyber dialogue (human rights online) and the EU-US Consular Working Group.

The use of the death penalty in the USA continued to be a matter of concern. 35 people were executed in 2014 and more than 3 000 remained on death row at the end of the year. On the basis of Council Regulation (EC) No 1236/2005 concerning trade in certain goods which could be used for capital punishment, torture or other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, export controls were applied to short- and intermediate-acting barbiturate anaesthetic agents. Some States stayed executions because of the shortage of appropriate drugs and/or the need to revise execution protocols as a result. Long and painful executions using untested combinations of drugs in at least three cases led to a stay of executions in the States of Arizona, Ohio and Oklahoma. Letters requesting clemency were sent concerning persons on death row who had not been granted their rights under the Vienna Convention on Consular Relations or who suffered from mental disability or mental illness, as well as in the case of an EU citizen. The EU issued statements, including within the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) and the Organisation of American States (OAS), against executions carried out under the above-mentioned circumstances. The EU issued a statement in the OSCE Permanent Council in September welcoming the swift action to clarify the circumstances of the fatal shooting of an unarmed young black man by a police officer in Ferguson (Missouri) and to address the response of the police to the demonstrations which occurred following that death.

During the year, the EU continued its dialogue with civil society organisations, including through involvement in events on topics such as the death penalty in the USA (to mark the World Day Against the Death Penalty), the US landmine policy review, the situation of women and EU-US cooperation on democracy support. As regards financial cooperation, two projects in support of the abolition of the death penalty continued in 2014 under the EIDHR.

The EUSR for Human Rights, Stavros Lambrinidis, visited Washington DC in February. He informed his US government, academic, and NGO interlocutors about the EU's human rights policy and priorities and explored the scope for further EU-US engagement and coordination in order to advance a bilateral and international agenda in keeping with the two sides' shared values and principles. He also engaged in substantive discussions on a number of human rights issues, including the ratification and application of international human rights instruments, cooperation on different countries and in multilateral fora, the internal and external dimensions of human rights-related policies, solitary confinement, and the death penalty.

In February, the European Parliament adopted a resolution on the use of armed drones which, inter alia, called on the EU to promote greater transparency and accountability on the part of third countries in their use. In a March resolution on the eradication of torture in the world, the EP expressed its deep concern at reports of EU-based companies supplying chemicals used for lethal injection drugs in the USA. Following an enquiry initiated the previous September, the EP adopted a resolution in March on the US NSA surveillance programme, surveillance bodies in various Member States and their impact on EU citizens' fundamental rights and on transatlantic cooperation in Justice and Home Affairs. In March, the European Parliament-US Congress Interparliamentary meeting in Washington DC reiterated the importance of the protection of privacy and civil liberties in the online environment and expressed concerns about the human rights situations in Syria and Venezuela. The EP held a debate in December on the study by the US Senate Select Committee on Intelligence of the CIA's Detention and Interrogation Programme.

In March, the UN Human Rights Committee adopted its concluding observations on the fourth periodic report of the USA under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights; in August, the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination adopted its concluding observations on the combined seventh to ninth periodic reports of the USA; and in November, the USA was reviewed by the UN Committee against Torture with regard to its human rights commitments under the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment. The EU participated in those meetings, and issues of EU concern such as indefinite detention in the Guantánamo Bay Facility, the US reservations to the Conventions, and the application of the death penalty and solitary confinement were discussed. In May, the UN's Working Group on the issue of human rights and transnational corporations and other business enterprises issued a report on its 2013 visit to the USA.

X Latin America and the Caribbean

Antigua and Barbuda

In 2014, the EU's human rights priorities for Antigua and Barbuda included tackling excessive use of force by police, poor prison conditions, limits on the freedom of the press, discrimination and violence against women, sexual abuse of children, and discrimination against homosexuals. The EU continued to provide support to and engage on policy matters with a panel of non-state actors. Implementation of the National Strategic Action Plan to End Gender-based Violence, which details the vision, principles, goals and outcomes for ending gender-based violence in Antigua and Barbuda, began in 2014. Furthermore, the EU encouraged policy dialogue and exchanges on the "one stop shop" approach to referrals for domestic violence.

The government continued to claim that the public would not support legal reforms such as abolishing the death penalty and repealing legislation that criminalises sexual relations between consenting adults of the same sex. The country's only prison continues to be plagued with overcrowding, violence and smuggling of contraband. A new prison governor was appointed in September and the government announced a range of other measures intended to put an end to corruption among prison officers and improve security.

Argentina

The EU's human rights objective in the framework of its relations with Argentina is to make optimal use of the instruments available for bilateral cooperation (political dialogue and EU-funded cooperation), maximising their efficient use and targeting them to the local situation. Thematic priorities include: the fight against poverty and the promotion of social inclusion, especially of the most vulnerable; women's rights; human trafficking; police practices; detention conditions; and guarantees.

EU cooperation with Argentina in multilateral human rights fora continued to be fruitful. Human rights issues also feature prominently in the EU-Argentina bilateral agenda with a specific EU-Argentina Joint Declaration on Human Rights (2008). The annual human rights dialogue did not take place in 2014.

The EU is currently providing financial support to projects that seek to: promote the rights and access to justice of people living with HIV/AIDS; support civil society in the fight against impunity; increase access to justice for vulnerable groups; and defend the rights of indigenous communities. Other projects will focus on gender-based violence, institutional violence, police practices and detention centres. The EU maintains contacts with civil society organisations, in particular with the Argentine Network for International Cooperation NGO platform.

In its international and multilateral action, Argentina has continued to promote its experience in the judging of crimes against humanity during the last military dictatorship (1976-1983), in a renowned process of Memory, Truth and Justice. Relevant actions in this sphere continue to feature in the EU's cooperation activities.

The Bahamas

In 2014, the EU's human rights priorities for The Bahamas focused on the abolition of the death penalty, improving conditions in detention centres, promoting women's rights and protecting them against gender-based violence, and ensuring the rights of immigrants from Haiti and elsewhere. The Bahamian authorities retain capital punishment and consider the death penalty an effective deterrent to crime. One person remains on death row. The current legislation equates to a *de facto* moratorium on the death penalty, as the right to appeal to the UK Privy Council prevents implementation of death sentences. However, in November The Bahamas voted against the most recent UN resolution on a moratorium on the use of the death penalty.

In July, the Persons with Disabilities (Equal Opportunities) Act was approved by the House of Assembly. This legislation aims to provide equality of opportunity for people with disabilities and eliminate discrimination on the basis of disability. It also establishes a National Commission for Persons with Disabilities. A new immigration policy came into effect in November, requiring all non-Bahamians to hold passports indicating their nationality and evidence of permission to reside and work in The Bahamas. An estimated 30 000 to 50 000 Haitian immigrants and their children are denied Bahamian citizenship, despite some having been born in The Bahamas, and are also without citizenship in Haiti, leaving them stateless.

During 2014 the EU encouraged The Bahamas to make progress on the main recommendations of the Universal Periodic Review on national human rights institutions, the death penalty, police misconduct, and discrimination based on sexual orientation. These issues were discussed at the inaugural political dialogue under Article 8 of the Cotonou Partnership between The Bahamas and the EU in October. The EU welcomed initiatives started in 2014 to improve the treatment of Haitian immigrants and urged The Bahamas to make further progress. The EU also continued to lobby The Bahamas to ratify the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court.

Barbados

In 2014, the EU's human rights priorities in the framework of its relations with Barbados included the abolition of the death penalty, improving prison conditions, tackling excessive use of force by police and corporal punishment, discrimination against homosexuals, promoting women's and children's rights and tackling gender-based violence. Positive developments included proposed legislation to abolish both the mandatory imposition of the death penalty for the offence of murder and the use of corporal punishment in prisons, to establish a prison release (parole) board and to institute conditional release of prisoners.

In 2014, the EU continued to raise and discuss issues such as domestic violence, the death penalty and LGBTI rights with the authorities. The EU leads an informal group of development partners and national departments aiming to improve approaches to gender-based domestic violence, which continues to be a serious problem. One of the main issues is the legal drafting and enactment of a new bill on domestic violence. The EU Delegation and other international organisations have made concerted efforts to raise the level of public awareness, which probably contributed to the establishment by the Barbadian police of a domestic violence unit, tasked with developing protocols to guide the behaviour of officers when dealing with domestic violence.

Sexual relations between same-sex adults continue to be illegal in Barbados but a survey released in 2014 showed that a majority of Barbadians are either tolerant or accepting of homosexuals, with the proportion of persons who could genuinely be described as homophobic standing at approximately 17 %. The country will soon embark upon a new HIV National Strategic Plan 2014-2018 which includes strategies to reach key populations and reduce the stigma and discrimination associated with HIV, which can stop those in need of care from accessing it. In this context a virtual HIV Research Unit and other initiatives were launched.

Belize

In 2014, the EU's human rights priorities for Belize included reducing lengthy periods of pre-trial detention, stopping the use of excessive force by security forces, tackling domestic violence and discrimination against women, and tackling child abuse. The EU also prioritised combating human trafficking and discrimination based on sexual orientation. Belize retains the death penalty for murder and military offences, however it is considered to be a *de facto* abolitionist state.

The UN Human Rights Council conducted its second Universal Periodic Review for Belize in October 2013 and throughout 2014 the EU encouraged Belize to implement its recommendations, including on establishing a National Human Rights Institution, revising anti-sodomy legislation, tackling gender-based violence and ratifying key human rights instruments. In 2014, Belize was faced with a human rights challenge before the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR), brought by the United Belize Advocacy Movement (UNIBAM), an NGO which is challenging the constitutionality of Belize's sodomy laws. UNIBAM petitioned the IACHR to instruct the government of Belize to implement measures to protect the rights of LGBTI citizens. The EU continued to promote human rights through discussions with key civil society and interest groups as well as the government. Human rights issues were prominently addressed in the first ever political dialogue under Article 8 of the Cotonou Partnership between the EU and Belize in March. In 2014 the EU continued to support important work with UNICEF on protecting children and in mobilising civil society organisations and care-givers to bring an end to violence against children. The EU also continued cooperation with partners on prison reform and improved prison conditions.

Bolivia

The EU's objectives on human rights and democracy in the framework of its relations with Bolivia include strengthening the rule of law and improving access to justice, protecting and enforcing the rights of indigenous peoples, and eliminating violence against women and children. Bolivia has been identified as a pilot country under the Agenda for Action on Democracy Support.

The EU continued to engage in human rights and democracy dialogue with Bolivia in various formats, including the joint working group on democracy and human rights, which met twice in 2014. Discussions also took place in the context of the EU-Bolivia High-Level Dialogue in November and through the monitoring of the implementation of human rights conventions under the Generalised Scheme of Preferences (GSP+), focusing in particular on electoral issues, the rights of indigenous peoples and children's rights.

The EU deployed an election expert mission (EEM) to the general elections which took place on 12 October. The EEM noted progress in fulfilling the recommendations of previous election missions and some remaining challenges, including the need to strengthen the electoral tribunal, to provide the public with more information and to guarantee political organisations equal access to financial resources.

In October, Bolivia underwent its second Universal Periodic Review (UPR). The majority of recommendations concerned violence against women and children, the independence and reform of the judicial system, human trafficking, overcrowding of prisons, discrimination against indigenous peoples and Afro-Bolivians, and implementation of the freedom of expression. The EU participated in the preparations, and discussed the human rights priorities with the Bolivian authorities.

During the year, the EU stepped up its dialogue with civil society organisations including through consultations on the planning and evaluation of EU development assistance. As regards financial cooperation, the EIDHR provided support on preventive detention, and the Instrument contributing to Stability and Peace continued to support consultation with indigenous peoples, conflict management and prevention, and strengthening of the independence of the judicial system. Justice sector reform is also one of the priority areas for the EU's bilateral assistance to Bolivia in 2014-2016 under the Development Cooperation Instrument.

Brazil

The fourth EU-Brazil High Level Dialogue on Human Rights took place in Brasilia on 25 April. It was co-chaired by the EU Special Representative (EUSR) for Human Rights, Stavros Lambrinidis, and Brazil's Minister for Human Rights, Ideli Salvatti. The topics discussed under bilateral relations included LGBTI rights, human rights defenders, torture, older persons' rights, racial discrimination, youth and migration, persons with disabilities, freedom of religion and belief and children's rights. Discussion on multilateral issues included challenges to the universality of human rights, cooperation on country-specific resolutions in multilateral fora, LGBTI, racism, and business and human rights. For the first time, a civil society representative participated in the Dialogue. A dedicated EU-Brazil human rights civil society seminar took place in Rio de Janeiro on 3 April, focussing on human rights, education and sport. The EU Delegation to Brazil also organised an event on human rights, education, sport and football under the heading "Futuro em Jogo" (future in the game).

Brazil hosted the NETmundial Internet Governance Conference in Sao Paulo in April 2014. This was a global multi-stakeholder meeting to discuss the future of internet governance, with a focus on the protection of human rights online. More than 1 400 stakeholders from 97 nations participated. EUSR Lambrinidis represented the EU at this event, which produced a non-binding set of recommendations for the future development of internet governance.

During the World Cup there were instances of clashes between the military police and protesters, including harassment or intimidations of journalists, but such incidents remained rather isolated. Extrajudicial killings remained a problem in 2014. According to UN estimates around 6 deaths per day occurred during police operations. More generally, Brazil had over 56,000 homicides (data for 2012).

Indigenous peoples' land tenure remained a major issue in 2014. The situation remains very worrying, with several murders of indigenous leaders and a lack of systematic follow up by the judiciary. A proposed constitutional reform that would transfer the authority to approve and demarcate indigenous lands from the executive branch to the Congress may further complicate the issue, given the strong representation of farming interests in Congress. The EU continued to engage with the federal authorities responsible for matters related to indigenous peoples, as well as with the Human Rights Secretariat and the Human Rights Defenders programme.

In support of the promotion and protection of human rights in Brazil, the EU approved several new projects under various financial instruments including the EIDHR, the Civil Society Organisations and Local Authorities thematic line and the Instrument contributing to Stability and Peace. New projects were adopted in support of the rights of women, of children, of indigenous peoples and of LGBTI persons.

Chile

The EU's priorities on human rights and democracy in the framework of its relations with Chile include the situation of indigenous peoples, gender equality, human rights violations during the military dictatorship, support for civil society and international cooperation.

Close cooperation and dialogue with Chile on human rights continued in 2014, covering issues such as the rights of indigenous peoples, LGBTI rights, gender equality and actions to record and preserve memories of the military dictatorship. These areas were reflected in political dialogue with the Chilean authorities as well as in the agenda of the annual EU-Chile human rights dialogue held in Santiago on 14 October. The EU and Chile also coordinated in international fora on a number of issues of mutual interest and agreed to continue this coordination in the future.

Other significant developments related to human rights during the year included the commitment of the new Chilean government, which took office in March, to developing and strengthening the country's institutional framework for human rights. The legislative procedure to create the post of Undersecretary for Human Rights was initiated and a decision to create a Ministry of Indigenous Peoples announced. In January, Chile underwent the second UPR cycle and committed to implement the vast majority of its recommendations.

During the year, the EU continued its dialogue with civil society by consulting NGOs (in dedicated sessions) on issues relevant to human rights. Meetings with the representatives of Chilean and international civil society organisations were held in Santiago and in Brussels and contributed to the preparation of the annual human rights dialogue.

EU thematic lines were used to finance cooperation involving civil society groups and government institutions. The EU provided support to projects in the areas of gender equality (in cooperation with UN Women), strengthening of civil society in monitoring Chile's progress, implementation of international commitments and anti-discrimination legislation.

Colombia

The EU's priorities on human rights and democracy in the framework of its relations with Colombia include impunity, children's rights, women in conflict, human rights defenders and the situation of ethnic minorities and indigenous groups.

The EU and its Member States regularly follow and analyse the human rights situation in Colombia through a local working group, reporting to Heads of Mission when a situation becomes particularly serious and when common action, for example a visit to a human rights organisation or a field visit, is deemed appropriate and necessary. The local group, under chairmanship of the EU Delegation, also initiates joint activities to support ongoing efforts by authorities and civil society to improve the human rights situation.

The ninth session of the EU-Colombia Human Rights Dialogue, which took place on 24 October in Bogotá, enabled exchanges on reintegration of former combatants, the reforms underway in the justice sector, the establishment of a comprehensive policy on human rights and the land restitution process – including the threats and other difficulties faced by land restitution activists and other human rights defenders and the measures taken to guarantee their protection. The EU reiterated its concerns with regard to the proposed reform of criminal military jurisdiction. A seminar had been held with civil society organisations to prepare for the dialogue.

On various occasions, in the context of high-level meetings and in official statements, the EU expressed its political support for the negotiations being conducted to end the internal conflict with the FARC-EP guerrilla organisation. In a statement made on 10 June, the HRVP's spokesperson expressed the EU's support for the steps taken by the parties in the negotiations to ensure that the interests of victims would be given a central place in the discussions.

During the year, the European Parliament continued to show a strong interest in the human rights situation in Colombia, in particular through a number of written questions and hearings.

A number of projects related to human rights are being funded in Colombia under the EIDHR. The main topics covered are children in armed conflicts, human rights defenders, support to internally displaced persons, land restitution, indigenous communities and gender-based violence. In addition, the Instrument contributing to Stability and Peace is providing, through five projects, financial support to the implementation of the law on victims and land restitution, including the challenge of the protection of land restitution claimants and activists/human rights defenders. DG ECHO also continued to provide assistance to the victims of the internal conflict in Colombia with a strong focus on internally displaced persons and refugees in neighbouring countries.

Costa Rica

The EU's objectives on human rights and democracy in the framework of its relations with Costa Rica include the right to life, tackling impunity, ensuring safety and security, tackling discrimination against minorities, and women's rights.

The EU continued to engage in discussions about human rights and democracy with Costa Rica in various formats, including frequent contacts with the local authorities and démarches to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in cooperation with EU Member States. Furthermore, dialogues with civil society organisations enabled the EU to monitor the human rights situation. In its regular political dialogue with the Costa Rican authorities, the EU has repeatedly raised the issues of drug-related crimes, corruption and security, and has expressed concern about LGTBI rights.

As regards financial cooperation, Costa Rica benefits from the EIDHR and from bilateral projects/programmes and actions. During the year, dialogue with civil society organisations was used as a basis for establishing the objectives of a call for proposals, which is to be launched in early 2015. In 2014, the EU continued to provide financial support to Costa Rica by means of the budget support programme PROSEC on the national security sector and public security, particularly by contributing to improving the training of the police force and strengthening its internal organisation. At the same time, the EU programme EMPRENDE continued to support and promote the increased economic independence of economically vulnerable women in rural and marginal urban areas.

Cuba

In 2014, the EU's objectives on human rights in the framework of its relations with Cuba were primarily focused on the abolition of the death penalty, the ratification of UN covenants on civil and political rights as well as economic, social and cultural rights, freedom of expression and association, and freedom of movement for Cuban citizens.

Despite the lack of a formal framework for dialogue, a major step forward in EU-Cuba relations took place in 2014 with the start of negotiations for a bilateral Political Dialogue and Cooperation Agreement. Two rounds of negotiations took place, in April and August. The EU is addressing issues related to human rights, good governance and civil society as cross-cutting matters in all negotiation chapters, ensuring that they will remain at the heart of the future relationship.

The moratorium on the death penalty remained in place in 2014, no new death sentences were pronounced and Cuba continued to abstain in the annual vote at the UNGA. The EU engaged in constructive dialogue with the Cuban government on the subject, both in Havana and New York. A 2013 law on migration eased most restrictions on freedom of movement for ordinary Cubans, including members of the dissidence. In 2014 this resulted in more contacts between representatives of Cuban civil society in Brussels and Member States' capitals. The EU continued to monitor closely the implementation of the law, in particular in respect of members of civil society and the opposition.

An increase in the number of arbitrary and short-term detentions of members of the opposition, activists and human rights defenders was noted with concern in late 2013 and early 2014. However, this was followed by a downward trend in numbers after the summer. Nonetheless, allegations of harassment, intimidation and, in some cases, violence remain frequent. The EU Delegation to Cuba has been monitoring cases of repression closely and conveyed its concerns to the Cuban authorities on various occasions.

The EU in Havana interacted with a diverse range of Cuban civil society representatives in the Human Rights working group, coordinated by the EU Delegation, to analyse and follow the situation, particularly with respect to freedom of expression and association, freedom of religion or belief and labour rights. However, open meetings with the opposition continue to be off-limits, in particular for EU and Member State ministers and senior officials on official visits.

The EU continued to support projects in Cuba to strengthen the rights of women, adolescents, and people with disabilities, and is undertaking a constant effort to expand the involvement of independent civil society organisations in both its political and cooperation work.

Dominica

The EU's priorities on human rights and democracy in the framework of its relations with Dominica include: addressing conditions of detention in an overcrowded prison; respect for women's and children's rights, including the fight against domestic violence; LGTBI rights; and the adverse conditions experienced by the indigenous Kalinago (Carib) population.

In its preparations for the second cycle of the UPR, held in May, the government declared that the abolition of the death penalty was not among its immediate priorities. Concerns remain over legislation which discriminates against LGBTI persons, the need for effective measures to uphold the right to education for all, in particular persons with disabilities, legislation which criminalises libel and slander and the fact that both the death penalty and corporal punishment are still permitted by law.

Nonetheless, a number of positive developments registered in Dominica were acknowledged in the UPR, especially: efforts to combat domestic violence and violence against women and children; the adoption of a National Policy and Action Plan for Gender Equality and Equity and efforts to empower women; the ratification of the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons; steps to address the needs of persons living with HIV/AIDS; the ratification of the Convention of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities; progress in the health sector and in the reduction of the under-5 mortality rate; the provision of free primary and secondary education; and the extension of a standing invitation to the UN Special Procedures. The EU Delegation in Dominica supports and funds work to combat domestic violence (call for proposals with submissions in 2015 under EIDHR). A non-state actors (NSA) panel is funded under the 10th EDF Technical Cooperation Facility and the EU provides financial support for the implementation of the government's poverty reduction strategy.

Dominican Republic

The EU's priorities on human rights and democracy in the framework of its relations with the Dominican Republic include tackling gender-based violence; promoting respect for children's rights including tackling child labour and prostitution; tackling discrimination on grounds of sexual orientation; defending and promoting the rights of Haitian migrant workers and their descendants born in the Dominican Republic; and upholding the rights of people with disabilities.

The Dominican Republic is a functioning democracy with a strong presidency and a recent history of elections declared free and fair. But politicians are not trusted, accusations of corruption are frequent and impunity is prevalent. Lack of access to justice is also a significant human rights problem. Despite perceived increasing levels of commitment to institutionalisation and social cohesion, profoundly conservative social attitudes in some sectors and leading religious institutions remain, as do corruption, cronyism, and authoritarian violence. Human rights are formally respected, and all relevant conventions have been ratified except for those on the prevention of statelessness.

The controversial September 2013 verdict of the Constitutional Court, effectively causing de facto statelessness for thousands of persons born in the Dominican Republic but of foreign (mainly Haitian) descent, continued to be of concern throughout 2014. The EU has urged the authorities of the Dominican Republic to address this major problem, and the EU Delegation is constantly following the situation in close contact both with the Dominican government and with human rights defenders and associations.

The EU has been supporting public administration reform, the improvement of bilateral relations between the Dominican Republic and Haiti, and work in the areas of governance and human rights. The EU supports projects in different areas through the EIDHR and has made a significant contribution to the management of Haitian migration and related issues with a programme funded through the Instrument contributing to Stability and Peace. The EU, mainly through its Delegation in the country, has frequent contacts with civil society organisations. Annual meetings take place between human rights defenders and EU embassies on sensitive issues relating to human rights.

Ecuador

The EU's objectives on human rights and democracy in the framework of its relations with Ecuador include: promoting the legitimacy of the work of human rights defenders; encouraging the participation of civil society in public policies; supporting freedom of expression; and ensuring better protection of vulnerable groups including indigenous peoples and minorities, migrants, women and children.

Dialogue on human rights with Ecuador continued in 2014, with an ad hoc local human rights dialogue in May, a specific meeting with human rights defenders, and discussions on human rights during the EU-Ecuador High-Level Dialogue held in November. While the Ecuadorian authorities put emphasis on the new rights and liberties guaranteed in the 2008 Constitution and achievements in the field of social progress and non-discrimination, the EU raised concerns about increasing limitations on the freedom of expression and association, the criminalisation of social protest, the independence of the judicial system and the shrinking space available to civil society. With reference to Ecuador's critical position towards the Inter-American System of Human Rights, the EU insisted on the universality of human rights and on the need to promote the role of supra-national protection schemes.

Local elections took place in February without any violent incidents or human rights violations and were well prepared, with some progress in the organisation of the vote. The EU was not invited to observe these elections.

In 2014, the EU strengthened its dialogue with civil society organisations in the process of drawing up the country roadmap for engagement with civil society. A meeting was organised in October at the request of civil society organisations to provide information on the implications of the trade agreement between the EU and Ecuador.

As regards financial cooperation, Ecuador benefits from various thematic lines to fund projects focusing on human rights (EIDHR, Migration and asylum, Investing in people, Non-state actors). Currently, the EU supports projects to protect human rights defenders' organisations and build their capacities, and to protect migrants' rights. In addition, as a result of an EIDHR call for proposals published in early 2014, new projects will be funded with the following aims: fostering public dialogue at community level; fostering citizens' participation and strengthening legislative management in the National Assembly; and promoting the defence of the environmental, economic, social and cultural rights of vulnerable populations.

El Salvador

The EU's objectives on human rights and democracy in the framework of its relations with El Salvador are to improve social cohesion and universal access to economic and social rights, to prevent social violence, and to promote gender equality. In 2014, work continued both through bilateral cooperation with the government and through the funding of projects designed and implemented by civil society organisations or local authorities.

The EU deployed an Election Expert Mission (EEM) in El Salvador for the presidential elections held in February and March. The EU congratulated the authorities for the high standard of the electoral process and encouraged the Supreme Electoral Court (SEC) to take into account the EEM's recommendations, such as addressing the need to separate the administrative and jurisdictional functions of the SEC.

Through regular political dialogue with the Salvadoran authorities, the EU discussed human rights issues including the migrant children crisis, public insecurity, and social, economic and cultural rights. It also reiterated the need to ratify international human rights instruments including the Rome Statute and the Second Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. The latter has now been approved and some progress has been made on the Rome Statute, with a draft bill of ratification having been discussed in the Legislative Assembly.

The EU issued statements and organised events in coordination with EU Member States on the World Day against the Death Penalty and World Human Rights Day. It also delivered messages on violence against women, LGBTI rights, minorities, human trafficking, migrant children, at-risk youth, and the need to abolish the death penalty – including in case of war – which is still permitted by the Constitution. During 2014, the EU continued its dialogue with civil society organisations, including consultations prior to launching calls for proposals. It also held meetings with human rights defenders, international NGOs in El Salvador and the Office of Human Rights Defence. Together with other Central American countries, El Salvador welcomed the EU strategy on Citizen Security adopted in July 2014.

As regards financial cooperation, El Salvador benefits from the EIDHR, and projects funded are focused on strengthening human rights defenders' organisations and on the provision of emergency assistance to victims and witnesses. Furthermore, the EU continued to provide financial support to El Salvador through the Instrument contributing to Stability and Peace by launching a call for proposals to support women's rights defenders and work for the rehabilitation of women in prisons.

Grenada

The EU continued to engage in human rights and democracy discussions with Grenada in various formats, covering issues including the death penalty, prison conditions, sexual abuse, domestic violence, and LGBTI discrimination. In its political dialogue with Grenada, the EU repeatedly reiterated its pleas for the abolition of the death penalty and the enacting of legislation to protect individuals from discrimination based on their sexual orientation, gender identity or consensual same-sex conduct.

The EU and other international organisations have urged the Constitution Review Commission set up in 2014 to: recommend the repealing of all legislation prohibiting and punishing consensual same-sex relations, including in the Criminal Code; specify both sexual orientation and gender identity as unlawful grounds for discrimination in national legislation; and establish and implement policies and initiatives to address discrimination. The abolition of the death penalty is not contemplated in the Constitutional reform but Grenada acknowledges the existence of a “*de facto* moratorium”. The last execution was carried out in 1978 and the last time a death sentence is known to have been imposed was in 2002. In August, Grenada ratified the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

Guatemala

The EU's objectives on human rights and democracy in the framework of its relations with Guatemala are: to strengthen the justice system; to promote the ratification and full implementation of international conventions; to reduce social conflicts; to support the implementation of the existing legal framework on femicide and violence against women; and to enhance the protection mechanisms for human rights defenders. In 2014, work continued in these areas through the introduction of a specific monitoring system, meetings with civil society, the private sector, human rights defenders and the government, and through policy dialogue. The annual human rights defenders' meeting took place in November. The EU Delegation also took several measures to strengthen the "Filter Group," an internal mechanism coordinated by the EU together with EU Member States, Norway and Switzerland, to monitor emblematic cases of threats and attacks against human rights defenders and to take joint action where deemed appropriate.

Regarding the high challenges on freedom of association, an ILO mission took place in September 2014 underlining four urgent needs: investigation of crimes against trade unionists, adoption of measures to protect trade union officials, legislative reforms and launch of a campaign on freedom of association. Given the Government's efforts, the decision on the establishment of a Commission of Inquiry concerning the non-observance by Guatemala of the Freedom of Association ILO Convention, 1948 (no. 87) has been deferred to the ILO March 2015 Governing Body.

During 2014, the EU continued to cooperate with the ILO on the promotion of freedom of association and social dialogue in Guatemala.

Furthermore, in its regular political dialogue with the authorities, the EU has reiterated its pleas for: rule of law compliant with international standards; the protection of human rights defenders; strengthening of dialogue mechanisms; the implementation of the Rome Statute; detailed follow-up of UPR recommendations; the abolition of the death penalty; and support for specific UNHR Council resolutions.

The EU also expressed the importance of judicial independence and continued to monitor the judicial proceedings against those accused of human rights violations during the internal armed conflict. The EU followed up on several high profile cases of attacks against human rights defenders and cases of social conflict, and financed a national campaign implemented by *Acción Ciudadana* to promote transparency in public administration. In March, the EU issued a joint statement with national and international stakeholders in support of the rule of law and judicial independence in the context of judicial nominations and the replacement of the Attorney-General. Guatemala, together with other Central American countries, welcomed the EU Strategy on Citizen Security, adopted in July 2014.

During the year, the EU stepped up its dialogue with civil society organisations by holding a series of human rights consultations and awareness-raising events. It has involved civil society in the implementation of the EU-Central America Association Agreement, regional integration processes and GSP+ monitoring exercise, engaging in dialogue with all major trade union confederations. As regards financial cooperation, Guatemala benefits from the EIDHR, under which projects are being implemented to combat violence against women, to strengthen the protection of human rights defenders and of children and adolescents, and to secure a wider translation and distribution of the EU Guidelines on Human Rights Defenders. Political and financial support has also been extended to the International Commission against Impunity in Guatemala (CICIG) and other organisations promoting human rights and social inclusion.

Guyana

Guyana is still a fragile, gradually consolidating, democracy with a multi-ethnic and multi-religious population. Certain progress has been made in building domestic capability in the governance infrastructure and several sectors of the economy. The EU has identified domestic violence (including sexual violence), child abuse and LGBTI rights as the main human rights issues to be addressed in the framework of its relations with Guyana. Trafficking of persons and prostitution of women and girls in remote mining areas remain serious problems.

Whilst there is a de facto moratorium on the death penalty, capital punishment is still provided for in the Constitution. Abolition of the death penalty was raised in the political dialogue between Guyana and the EU which took place in February under Article 8 of the Cotonou Agreement. The Guyanese government has launched a public consultation on the issue.

The EU continues to support civil society organisations through the Non State Actors and Local Authorities and EIDHR thematic lines. Several programmes were underway in 2014, with aims including the provision of support for victims of domestic and sexual violence; the upholding of LGBTI rights; empowerment of Amerindian communities; and strengthening of the press and broadcast media to promote human rights and democratic development, and facilitate public dialogue and civic engagement.

Haiti

Human rights and democracy are top priorities for the EU in the framework of its relations with Haiti. Specifically, this includes: consolidation of democracy and of democratic institutions; promoting the rule of law; women's rights, including tackling gender-related violence; children's rights, including the issue of children living in conditions of domestic slavery (Restavek); improving the dysfunctional judiciary system and appalling detention conditions; and strengthening civil society organisations promoting human rights and human rights defenders.

In the context of its political dialogue with the Haitian government and with other relevant institutional actors, the EU continued to call for the long overdue municipal and legislative elections to be held without further delay. The electoral process was postponed because the amended electoral law had become blocked in the Senate, against the background of demands for the composition of the Electoral Provisional Council to be changed, requests for political prisoners to be released, and other complaints. The EU has contributed EUR 5 million to the UNDP-managed "basket" fund for the organisation of the elections. In support of institutional capacity-building, the EU funded three projects, under the Instrument contributing to Stability and Peace, implemented by the Club de Madrid, IDEA and the UNDP respectively, with the objective of providing high level advice, facilitating inter-institutional dialogue, and strengthening the functioning of political parties and of the judiciary.

In 2014, Haiti ratified a number of international human rights instruments, including the Optional Protocols to the Convention on the Rights of the Child concerning the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography, and the involvement of children in armed conflict. Haiti also acceded to the Protocol on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. In October, Haiti presented its report on the implementation of the International Protocol on civil and political rights to the 112th session of the UN Human Rights Committee.

However, several major concerns have not been tackled and require urgent corrective action. They include: non-prosecuted excessive use of force and ill treatment by law enforcement bodies; extremely poor detention conditions and prolonged pre-trial detention (75 % of the entire prison population is awaiting trial); a dysfunctional judicial system; human trafficking; widespread violations of women's and children's rights including gender-based violence and children living in conditions of domestic slavery; and severe socio-economic inequalities. Lack of institutional capacity and resources continue to represent an additional serious obstacle to the implementation of existing and new human rights legislation.

The EU has continued its dialogue with civil society with a view to establishing a "road map" aiming at a greater involvement of civil society organisations in EU activities as well as improving their advocacy capacities vis-à-vis the Haitian authorities. Under the EIDHR, six new projects were selected for funding in 2014, and special EIDHR grants (small grants) were awarded to three non-governmental organisations in order to strengthen their security, as they had received threats.

Honduras

The EU's objectives on human rights and democracy in the framework of its relations with Honduras include strengthening the rule of law and the national system for the promotion of human rights, and protecting human rights defenders and vulnerable groups. In 2014, the EU continued to engage in human rights and democracy discussions with Honduras in various formats, including in the framework of political dialogue for development and cooperation. The situation in Honduras continues to give cause for concern because of attacks, harassment and violence against human rights defenders and vulnerable groups.

In the EU-Honduras regular political dialogue, key challenges such as respect for human rights and the rule of law, poverty, social inequality, the homicide rate, corruption in the public administration and the high levels of impunity are regularly addressed. During the visit of President Juan Orlando Hernández to Brussels in October, the EU emphasised the importance of human rights, security and justice reforms. The government expressed its willingness to tackle these major challenges and to engage with the international community, welcoming the EU strategy on Citizen Security, which was adopted in July 2014.

Following general elections in late 2013, the EU Election Observation Mission (EOM) issued its final report in February 2014 which contained a series of recommendations, including on electoral reform. The EU Delegation monitored the situation throughout the year and issued a press release in November, in the context of the domestic debate on electoral reform, recalling the EOM recommendations and the importance of holding a debate on inclusive, participative and transparent democratic processes.

Other significant developments included the government's official request for a country office of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, and the youth migration crisis that emerged in June and which was addressed via donor coordination initiatives (Migration International Conference held in Honduras in July).

The EU's dialogue with civil society on human rights and democracy was stepped up in 2014 with the establishment of a "Grupo ENLACE" (platform for dialogue) and the development of a roadmap for engagement with civil society to discuss, inter alia, the selection of Honduras for the 2015 Universal Periodic Review. As regards financial cooperation, Honduras benefits from the EIDHR, under which a call for proposals to support human rights defenders and to enhance social scrutiny in the area of human rights was prepared for publication. Honduras also benefits from relevant bilateral programmes such as EuroJusticia, a Human Rights Support Project and Civil Society Action for Promoting the Rights of Migrants.

Jamaica

The EU's human rights priorities for Jamaica in 2014 include: working towards the abolition of the death penalty; tackling alleged misconduct by the security forces; fighting discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation and improving the treatment of LGBTI persons; improving conditions of detention, especially for children; prisoner rehabilitation; and promoting women's and children's rights, including better access to justice. Jamaica retains the death penalty for murder, although it has observed a *de facto* moratorium on its application since 1988. Jamaica voted against the UN's latest resolution for a moratorium on the use of the death penalty in November. Police misconduct continues to be an issue of major concern for human rights activists in Jamaica. Despite some improvements, for example the number of fatal police shootings being halved in 2014, such events remain worryingly frequent.

The EU regularly discusses human rights issues with the government of Jamaica and human rights featured strongly in the second Article 8 Cotonou Political Dialogue between the EU and Jamaica, which took place in November. During the year, the EU encouraged Jamaica to ratify the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court and remaining key human rights conventions, as well as to implement pending UPR recommendations from the 2010 report.

During 2014, the EU promoted human rights through a number of activities and partnerships, including support for the Independent Commission for Investigations (INDECOM), which investigates alleged excesses and abuse by agents of the state. It also supported key non-governmental organisations working with children in detention, prison rehabilitation, parenting, life and social skills training, modernisation, LGBTI rights, human rights training, and advocacy. The EU launched the Justice, Security, Accountability and Transparency programme which aims to strengthen governance and oversight in the security and justice sectors. In partnership with the government, the 11th European Development Fund for Jamaica was launched in 2014 which includes significant funding for improving access to justice, especially for women and children. The EU partnered education groups to build awareness of sexual risks and to promote safer sex and behaviour change. The EU also partnered UNICEF to develop a Child Human Rights toolkit which was launched to coincide with the 25th anniversary of the Convention of the Rights of the Child. The EU also continued its support for gender equality and empowering women through a range of activities in the country.

Mexico

In its relations with Mexico, the EU focuses on key issues underlying the most serious abuses of human rights: the criminal justice system, including impunity, torture, arbitrary detention, military justice, due process rights and the independence of the judiciary; gender violence; threats against human rights defenders and journalists; and the rights of vulnerable groups (particularly indigenous peoples and migrants).

Mexico continues to face major public security concerns and challenges for the respect of human rights, as well as in the fight against organised crime and corruption. The disappearance and presumed murder of 43 students in Iguala, Guerrero, in September culminated in mass demonstrations across the country, laying bare Mexico's deep problems of impunity and corruption and overshadowing the current federal government's efforts to focus on economic reform. The government reacted with a package of initiatives to reform the police forces and to bring economic development to Mexico's most disadvantaged states.

The fourth EU-Mexico High Level Dialogue on Human Rights took place in Brussels in March. Headed by the EUSR for Human Rights and by the Mexican Deputy Foreign Minister, the dialogue included a well-attended civil society seminar, whose recommendations were presented by NGOs during the dialogue. Both parties committed to cooperating in fighting terrorism, organised crime, violence against women and gender discrimination. The EU Delegation to Mexico, together with EU Member States, issued three local declarations during the year: in February, condemning the murder of journalist Gregorio Jiménez in the State of Veracruz; in June, related to the murder of journalist Jorge Torres Palacios in the State of Guerrero; and in October on the disappearance of 43 students and the extra-judicial killing of 22 people in Tlatlaya. Following an "urgency" debate in October, the European Parliament adopted a resolution expressing concern at the disappearance of the 43 students and calling for increased EU support to strengthen state institutions and human rights and the fight against organised crime.

The EU continued its dialogue with civil society organisations, holding its second Civil Society Organisations Seminar in March. The EU Delegation strengthened its engagement with non-governmental organisations through the permanent Working Group with Civil Society on Human Rights, which held three regular meetings during 2014: in February, May and November. Under local guidelines on human rights defenders, the EU Delegation and Member States' missions continued their regular engagement with human rights defenders. Field visits were made to the States of Chiapas and Chihuahua, and meetings were held with high-level representatives of the federal authorities from the Ministries of Foreign Affairs, Interior and Migration.

The EU continued to monitor closely developments in the case of Jyri Jaakkola, a Finnish citizen and supporter of local human rights defenders, killed in Oaxaca in 2010. The EU Delegation, in close coordination with the Embassy of Finland, helped to organise meetings for visiting Members of the European Parliament in June and for the victim's parents and lawyers in November, to follow up on the investigation into Jaakkola's death and to maintain pressure on the competent authorities to resolve this case.

In the multilateral arena, the EU and Mexico continued their constructive engagement through consultations in New York, Geneva and Mexico City. In the March Human Rights Council session, Mexico replied to the UPR recommendations of October 2013. Mexico accepted 166 out of 176 recommendations received, and included them in the National Programme of Human Rights. Its refusal to eliminate pre-charge detention provisions, known as "arraigo", in several state legislations, remains a matter of concern, even though the frequency such detentions has decreased. The EU's cooperation accompanied the political priorities under the bilateral DCI allocation, under the EIDHR and under the Non-State Actors (NSA) instrument. The DCI-financed "Social Cohesion Laboratory II" kicked off in 2014 and includes a substantial component on human rights and access to justice, with specific focuses on gender-related violence, illegitimate use of force, protection of human rights defenders and journalists, and indigenous peoples' rights, as well as on providing support to the criminal justice reform process.

The EIDHR supports projects to strengthen, inter alia, the work of human rights defenders through protection, documentation, and advocacy in cases of attacks and threats. In June, a local call for proposals was launched under the NSA instrument to support NGOs, strengthening the capacities and the role of civil society as an actor in advocacy, dialogue, monitoring, evaluation of public policies and practices regarding national strategies, and facilitating the participation of NSAs in the implementation and monitoring of public policies and practices in the areas of public safety and law enforcement.

Nicaragua

The EU's objectives on human rights and democracy in the framework of its relations with Nicaragua are: to strengthen the national framework for tackling gender-based violence; to encourage a free civil society active in promoting and protecting human rights and able to engage in policy discussions on the national development agenda; to support efforts to strengthen the rule of law (transparency, efficiency, accountability); to promote the social, education and health rights of the most vulnerable groups through development cooperation; and to support initiatives for capacity building and increasing social awareness among young people.

In 2014, work continued in these areas. A particular focus was placed on Nicaragua's Universal Periodic Review and strengthening dialogue with civil society. The EU reiterated the importance of key issues such as transparency, strengthening good governance, promoting the separation of powers and electoral issues. At the same time, the EU analysed the recently approved reform of the military code and the new law on the national police, as well as the possible impact of strategic infrastructure projects on social and environmental rights. The EU also closely monitored episodes affecting citizen security in the northern part of the country, underlining the need for transparent investigations and impartial trials. Finally, special attention was devoted to following up on the situation of indigenous peoples' rights and the respect of rights of inmates under trial or already convicted, as well as conditions in the national prison system.

As regards financial cooperation, the EU continued to promote human rights through the EIDHR and Non State Actors and Local Authorities (NSA-LA) thematic lines. In 2014, two new projects were approved, including gender violence and gender education. Other ongoing EIDHR projects, of which there were sixteen in total, addressed the following issues: citizens' participation, juvenile restorative justice, human rights promotion focused on the Caribbean coastal region, women's rights and LGBTI rights. In 2014, a total of 50 NSA-LA projects were being implemented, most of them related to economic and social rights.

During the year, the EU actively engaged in donor coordination on security and the rule of law within the national cooperation coordination mechanism with the national police, and addressed human right issues when necessary in other technical donor coordination fora.

Panama

The EU's objectives on human rights and democracy in the framework of its relations with Panama include supporting indigenous peoples' rights, improving detention conditions, working with civil society, promoting international human right mechanisms and enhancing EU coordination. In 2014, activities included a meeting of EU diplomats with the Director of the prison system to raise concerns about prison conditions, notably unhygienic conditions, lack of water, food of poor quality and lack of medical care, as well as other meetings with civil society organisations and human rights defenders.

As regards financial cooperation, two EU-funded bilateral programmes address some of the above concerns. The "Support for Social Cohesion" programme, implemented by the Ministry of Social Development, includes activities in favour of indigenous peoples and organisations such as the technical strengthening of AMUNIKA, a group of municipalities in the Ngöbe- Buglé Territory. This programme also has the indirect aim of defending the economic and social rights of this community, in the poorest regions of the country, through decentralisation and funding of local projects. In 2014, the EU launched a new bilateral programme on security cooperation in Panama (SECOPA), with the objective of improving coexistence and citizen security on the basis of a comprehensive, balanced and human rights-based approach to security sector reform in Panama. It will help strengthen the public prosecution service and reform the penitentiary system in line with human rights and international standards, and support the rehabilitation and social reintegration of young offenders. During the year, the EU actively engaged in donor coordination on security and the rule of law within the framework of SECOPA and also in other fora.

Civil society organisations and NGOs in Panama can benefit from EIDHR support, however there were no projects under implementation during 2014. Preparations commenced for a new call for proposals to be launched in 2015 with the objective of funding new projects in the country.

Paraguay

The EU's priorities on human rights and democracy in the framework of its relations with Paraguay include: the improvement of the functioning of the justice and penitentiary systems; the institutionalisation of human rights; the protection of the rights of children; women; the LGBTI community; indigenous peoples; the fight against trafficking in human beings; and respect for environmental rights. The EU continued to pursue these issues in various formats, including during the meeting of the EU-Paraguay Joint Cooperation Committee held in November and through the monitoring of implementation of human rights conventions in the context of the Generalised Scheme of Preferences (GSP+).

As regards financial cooperation, the EIDHR provided support for indigenous women, the fight against human trafficking and the production and dissemination of an annual human rights report drafted by civil society organisations. Following a call for proposals under the EIDHR the previous year, further projects were under preparation in support of women's rights and the rights of indigenous peoples in the Paraguayan Chaco, and on enhancing the role of civil society in monitoring the electoral system. In addition, democracy, participation and institutional strengthening constitute one of the priority sectors for the EU's bilateral development assistance to Paraguay in 2014-2020.

Peru

The EU's priorities on human rights and democracy in the framework of its relations with Peru include: following up the National Human Rights Plan of July 2014; the rights of indigenous peoples and the implementation of the Prior Consultation Law; the recommendations of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission; economic and social rights; freedom of assembly; human rights defenders; women's rights; human trafficking; and child labour.

Dialogue on human rights with Peru intensified in 2014 with the first formal technical dialogue on human rights held in July, which complemented discussions under the annual High-Level Dialogue. Issues discussed included improvements to the democratic system, labour rights and the promotion of corporate social responsibility, the fight against corruption, reconciliation policies and reparations for victims, and social inclusion. Work will be taken forward with a view to institutionalising the dialogue through formal terms of reference.

EU Heads of Mission and Development Commissioner Piebalgs visited Ayacucho, the region most affected by the violence of the *Sendero Luminoso*, in June and July. Their visit provided political momentum to the lingering debate around the implementation of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's recommendations. The EU and Germany sponsor the *Lugar de Memoria*, a museum in Lima which honours and preserves the memory of victims.

The EU Delegation maintained close contacts with civil society organisations, the office of the Ombudsman and government bodies, discussing the human rights situation, human rights defenders and indigenous peoples. It raised concerns about the killing in September of four indigenous leaders, supposedly by illegal loggers, pointing at the broader issues of land titling, mining and forest concessions as well as trafficking and corruption. EU funding for human rights projects in Peru during the year supported projects aiming to improve access to justice for vulnerable groups, to transform social conflicts by democratic means, to reduce violence and discrimination on grounds of sexual orientation and race, and to increase the political participation of women. Peru remained a reliable partner in international fora, voting close to EU positions in the UN General Assembly and the Human Rights Council, of which Peru was a member during 2014. Peru was one of the promoters of the first World Conference on Indigenous Peoples and, as host of the 20th UN Climate Change Conference, gave visibility to indigenous communities as a full party to the agreement.

St. Kitts and Nevis

The EU's priorities on human rights and democracy in the framework of its relations with St. Kitts and Nevis include ensuring protection rights linked to situations of national and citizens' security, drug-related crime, addressing violence in society and the application of corporal and capital punishment. Overcrowding and inhumane conditions in detention facilities continue to be major concerns. The EU is supporting policy and institutional reform in the fields of safety and security and social protection. Dialogue on human rights policy takes place in this context.

The last application of the death penalty was in 2008, and there is no moratorium in place in the country. According to the World Coalition against the Death Penalty, there are seven persons in the country who have been sentenced to death. The government considers that its social context and the increasing crime rate make it very difficult to justify to its population a decision to deprive the courts of that punishment option. Consensual sexual relations between same-sex adults continue to be illegal in St. Kitts and Nevis.

St. Lucia

The EU continued to engage in human rights and democracy discussions with St. Lucia in various formats on topics including the death penalty, domestic violence, LGBTI rights, child abuse, police brutality and gang violence. In its political dialogue, the EU consistently made pleas for the abolition of the death penalty, for police accountability to be increased, and for legislation to be enacted to protect individuals from discrimination based on their sexual orientation, gender identity or consensual same-sex conduct. The country retains the death penalty for murder and treason, but since 2002 its mandatory imposition has been discontinued.

Although the government has taken some steps to prosecute officials who commit abuses, the procedure for investigating police officers is lengthy, cumbersome and often inconclusive. When rare cases eventually come to trial, they are often acquitted, giving an appearance of de facto impunity. There was limited progress in the continuing investigations into the twelve fatal shootings by police in 2011, but reports were expected by the end of 2014.

Sexual activity between consenting adults of the same sex remains illegal. While the legislation is rarely applied, social discrimination against LGBTI persons remained widespread. The NGO United and Strong, St. Lucia's sole LGBT organisation, held an important workshop for media practitioners as part of an EU-funded regional project with the International Gay and Lesbian Human Rights Commission.

In June, the United Nations Child Rights Committee considered the combined second to fourth Universal Periodic Reviews of St. Lucia. It welcomed the adoption of several legislative measures, including the Anti-Gang Act of 2014. It also noted the ratification in 2014 of the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict, continuing a positive trend of accession to or ratification of important human rights protocols and conventions. Nonetheless, the Committee urged St. Lucia to address issues relating to corporal punishment, parental guidance and responsibilities, children deprived of a family environment, abuse and neglect, adolescent health, economic exploitation of children including child labour, sexual exploitation and abuse, and juvenile justice. The Committee was concerned that corporal punishment is still seen as a lawful way of disciplining children and about the high levels of incest and sexual abuse of boys and girls.

St. Vincent and the Grenadines

The EU's priority areas for action on human rights and democracy in the framework of its relations with St. Vincent and the Grenadines include domestic violence, sexual violence against women and girls, and occasional police use of excessive force. Other human rights concerns include the lack of government transparency, trafficking in persons and child abuse. The country is vulnerable to transnational trafficking and local cultivation of illicit drugs, with an adverse impact on its social structure. Sexual activity between consenting adults of the same sex remains illegal and social discrimination against LGBTI persons remains widespread.

The country still retains the death penalty for murder and treason, but is considered a de facto abolitionist. Judicial decisions over the years have made it extremely difficult for executions to take place in St. Vincent and the Grenadines. Following a spate of murders in November, however, some voices were heard from high authorities that the government might have to revisit the death penalty to see if it could help to tackle the high homicide rate.

The partnership and dialogue on human rights-related issues between the authorities of the EU and St. Vincent and the Grenadines was complemented by a non-state actors' panel which provided gender-sensitisation support to local civil society organisations promoting the right to participation in public life. The issue of domestic violence and promotion of gender equality was supported through social investment funds and budget support from the 10th EDF (European Development Fund).

Suriname

The EU's priorities on human rights and democracy in the framework of its relations with Suriname include: addressing relevant legislative challenges; improving conditions in prisons and detention centres and reducing lengthy periods of pre-trial detention; tackling domestic violence against women and sexual violence; working to prevent trafficking in persons including women and children for sexual exploitation; and promoting LGBTI rights. There are also concerns about: widespread government corruption; cases of press intimidation; discrimination against women; Maroons (descendants of escaped slaves), Amerindians and other minorities; and child labour in the informal sector. Draft legislation to abolish the death penalty has been approved by Parliament and is awaiting President's signature.

A roadmap for the main areas of collaboration with Surinamese civil society organisations for 2014-2017, finalised in June after consultations with Surinamese civil society, identified domestic violence, trafficking in persons and the abolition of the death penalty as areas where cooperation between the EU and civil society could have a positive impact. In May, a call for proposals was launched to support civil society actors in Suriname working on human rights (political, civil, economic, social and cultural) and democratisation. Work began to prepare a project to strengthen the oversight capacity of civil society organisations working to promote human rights and democracy.

Trinidad and Tobago

The EU's objectives on human rights in the framework of its relations with Trinidad and Tobago include: securing the abolition of the death penalty; promoting and safeguarding children's rights; tackling discrimination against LGBTI persons; and improving prison conditions and respect for prisoners' rights. The EU continued to engage in human rights discussions with Trinidad and Tobago in various formats, including, political dialogue and participation in civil society fora. In its regular political dialogue with the Trinidad and Tobago government, the EU reiterated its pleas for continuation of the current moratorium on execution and eventually the abolition of capital punishment, for discrimination against LGBTI persons to be made unlawful through legislative amendments, and for the efficient and timely implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, and in particular accession to its Optional Protocols.

The EU issued statements on the International Day Against Homophobia, the World Day against the Death Penalty and Universal Children's Day. The EU highlighted that the country's existing legislation on equal opportunities, immigration and sexual offences contains provisions that discriminate against LGBTI individuals. The EU underlined that the death penalty is inhumane and infringes the fundamental universal right to life. On Universal Children's Day, the EU called for the swift implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and rapid accession to the Optional Protocols on the involvement of children in armed conflict and on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography.

In the course of the year, the EU continued its dialogue with civil society organisations, including by participating in monthly meetings with LGBTI groups. As regards financial cooperation, Trinidad and Tobago benefited, for the first time, from the EIDHR and a call for proposals was published in December. The objective is to foster respect for fundamental human rights and freedoms in Trinidad and Tobago by supporting activities that aim to abolish the death penalty, promote gender equality, and safeguard the rights of LGBTI persons.

Uruguay

The EU's objectives on human rights and democracy in the framework of its relations with Uruguay include supporting the reform and modernisation of the penal judiciary and penitentiary system; strengthening respect for the rights of women and children; reinforcing policies against discrimination; and promoting citizen security and human rights.

In the EU's regular political dialogue with the Uruguayan authorities in the Joint Committee, which met in June, both sides reaffirmed their commitment to the universal system of human rights protection and expressed their satisfaction with the Universal Periodic Review. They exchanged views on the reform of the Inter-American Human Rights System, which Uruguay is committed to strengthening. The EU and Uruguay continued their fruitful cooperation in international human rights fora, including on UNGA 69 resolutions on the rights of the child and the death penalty. The smooth and peaceful conduct of the elections held in October and November once again demonstrated Uruguay's exemplary democratic credentials. Other significant developments during the year included: a constitutional referendum in October on a proposal to reduce the age of criminal responsibility from 18 to 16 years, which was rejected; and the arrival in Uruguay in October of five Syrian families from a refugee camp in Lebanon. A second group expected in 2015 would bring the number of Syrian refugees accepted by Uruguay for full resettlement to 120. In December, six prisoners (four Syrians, a Tunisian and a Palestinian) arrived from the Guantánamo Bay Detention Centre to be resettled in Uruguay as refugees. President Mujica had agreed to this resettlement but rejected the US condition that they be required to remain in Uruguay for at least two years before being allowed to travel abroad.

In January, Uruguay underwent its second Universal Periodic Review (UPR), engaging very constructively and acknowledging remaining challenges. Uruguay immediately accepted all but one of the 188 recommendations received. The exception was one based on so-called "traditional values" which run counter to the principle of non-discrimination (Bangladesh called for protection of the family defined as being based on a relationship between a man and a woman). In July, the EU Delegation held an annual civil society meeting with NGOs which receive EU funding. A human rights working group with EU Member States was created in order to follow up on human rights issues in Uruguay including the implementation of the UPR recommendations.

Uruguay benefits from the EIDHR, and projects were ongoing in 2014 in the areas of citizen security, the rights of women and children rights, violence against women, sexual abuse, and social cohesion. Furthermore, the EU continued to provide financial support through the bilateral programme entitled "Support to the reform of the Uruguayan penal justice and penitentiary systems for the improvement of the quality of life and social and labour reintegration of prison inmates".

Venezuela

The EU does not have a formal political dialogue with the Venezuelan government, but *ad hoc* discussions on human rights take place during meetings between the EU Delegation, Member State embassies and the Venezuelan authorities. An annual exchange between the EU and Venezuelan human rights defenders was organised by the EU in Caracas in June.

Following the contested 2013 presidential elections, street protests broke out in February. Violent confrontations between protesters and security forces took place over several months. 43 people were killed, 1 095 wounded and 3 337 arrested, including students and opposition leaders, notably Leopoldo López of the Voluntad Popular party and Daniel Ceballos, the Mayor of the San Cristóbal municipality. The latter were among those imprisoned and facing trial for alleged involvement in the protests. A total of 69 people remained in prison as of November, facing various accusations linked to the streets protests.

In February, the HR/VP joined with the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights in calling on the Venezuelan authorities to ensure that accusations brought against those detained were impartially investigated, to decide on the lawfulness of their detention, or to order their release. In subsequent statements (in March and April) the HR/VP expressed concern at the detention of political figures and students. She underscored the importance of respect for human rights and freedom of expression in all circumstances, and called for regional efforts to be made to facilitate a dialogue between all parties.

The European Parliament adopted a resolution in February expressing deep concern at the arrests of students and opposition leaders and calling for their immediate release. Throughout the year, the EU closely followed the cases of the opposition leaders and students, and EU diplomatic representatives continued to observe the trial hearings of Leopoldo López as well as the ongoing case of Judge Maria Lourdes Afiuni.

In terms of practical support, the EU Delegation and Member States funded a wide range of projects with the Venezuelan government and NGOs with the aim of strengthening human rights and democracy. In 2014, this included supporting training programmes for the security forces, providing technical support to the National Assembly, promoting democratic dialogue, supporting democratic participation of indigenous communities, and supporting the provision of legal assistance for refugees.
