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**EU ANNUAL REPORT
ON HUMAN RIGHTS AND DEMOCRACY IN THE WORLD 2017**

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1. Introduction

In 2017, human rights remained at the heart of the European Union's external action, and the EU reaffirmed its role as a leading human rights actor in the global arena. In line with the objectives set out in the EU Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy (2015-2019)¹, the EU deployed actions to promote and protect human rights across the globe.

The Mid-term Review of the EU Action Plan² was published in June 2017 and showed that in an increasingly challenging international context, the Action Plan has been instrumental in fostering and delivering a coherent approach to mainstreaming human rights in all areas of EU external action. The review also showed an encouraging trend concerning human rights dialogues, which are gaining in legitimacy and exerting a more positive impact on third countries. Overall, the review confirmed that the EU has made good progress in implementing the Action Plan.

However, 2017 also saw a continued backlash against civil society. In line with the priorities of the Global Strategy for the European Union's Foreign and Security Policy³, the EU continued to firmly oppose any unjustified restrictions of the rights of freedom of association and peaceful assembly. The EU strongly supported an enabling environment for non-governmental organisations and human rights defenders through bilateral dialogues including human rights dialogues, financial support and in multilateral fora.

Furthermore, 2017 marked a milestone on the EU's global work with children's rights with the update of the 2007 Guidelines on the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of the Child⁴. The guidelines set out the EU's overarching strategy to strengthen efforts to ensure the rights of the child, and confirm that the EU will continue to stand up for the rights of all children to reach their full potential.

¹ Council conclusions on the Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy 2015 – 2019, 10897/15, 20 July 2015

² EU Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy (2015-2019): Mid-Term Review, 11138/17, 7 July 2017

³ Council conclusions on the Global Strategy on the European Union's Foreign and Security Policy, 13202/16, 17 October 2016

⁴ Revision of the EU Guidelines for the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of the Child (2017) Leave No Child Behind, 6846/17, 6 March 2017

This report gives a broad picture of the EU's human rights efforts regarding third countries in 2017. The report focuses on thematic issues, using country-specific examples. Unlike previous years, this report does not include a geographic part where all third countries are listed. However, human rights updates for each country can be found on the European External Action Service's (EEAS) and delegations' webpages.⁵ The new approach will result in a more reader-friendly and timely report, which will hopefully be a useful tool for all interlocutors.

2. EU Special Representative for Human Rights

The EU Special Representative (EUSR) for Human Rights, Stavros Lambrinidis, appointed in 2012, continued to work, under the authority of the HR/VP Mogherini, to increase the effectiveness, cohesion, and visibility of human rights in EU foreign policy. In 2017 the EUSR strengthened further the EU's engagement with a broad range of countries, international organisations, and civil society through official visits, human rights dialogues, multilateral engagements and representation activities.

He paid first-time official visits to Ethiopia and the Philippines, participated in return visits or Brussels-based high-level engagements with Iran, Egypt, Myanmar and Cuba, and attended high level follow-up meetings to earlier visits to Pakistan and Guatemala. These engagements contributed towards maintaining an open dialogue to advance human rights at bilateral and multilateral level. In all his visits the EUSR continued to raise key human rights concerns and to attempt to identify best ways to achieve concrete progress on the ground.

Another key focus of the EUSR was to continue coordinating bilateral, regional and multilateral human rights work with key partners through high-level human rights visits and dialogues, including with Brazil, Mexico, Switzerland and the United States.

⁵ [The European External Action Service's EEAS\)webpage](#)

2017 also saw the development of a new initiative to counter attacks on the universality of human rights, through highlighting, supporting and promoting "Good Human Rights Stories" and best practises already pursued by different countries across the globe. In this context, the EUSR paid official visits to governments, independent human rights institutions and civil societies in Burkina Faso, Ghana, the Gambia, Peru, Chile, Indonesia and South Korea and held bilateral exchanges with the foreign affairs ministers of Cape Verde, Argentina and Uruguay, among others. The visits highlighted the indispensability of the human rights framework in addressing all major domestic and international challenges of the 21st century, including sustainable security, development, and the promotion of social resilience, inclusiveness and cohesion. As 2018 marks the 70th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the 25th anniversary of the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action, and the 20th anniversary of the UN human rights defenders declaration, the work of the EUSR in this field will intensify.

To address all major human rights challenges, the EUSR continued to strengthen cooperation with the United Nations, in particular to support the all-important role of the UN Human Rights Council and of the broader international human rights architecture. He also intensified his long-standing high-level cooperation with the Council of Europe, as well as the EU's work to deepen cooperation with key regional organizations, including the African Union, the ASEAN, the OIC and the Organisation of American States.

The EUSR maintained the EU's strong support to civil society space and the protection of human rights defenders, focused on reversing crack-downs and new restrictive laws on non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in certain countries, on releasing imprisoned human rights defenders and peaceful activists and on supporting in numerous concrete ways their freedom to conduct their work.

Finally, through dedicated visits, speaking engagements, academic interactions and international conferences, the EUSR continued to increase the EU's visibility and to advocate for key EU thematic priorities, including the fight against torture, the abolition of the death penalty, economic, social and cultural rights, business and human rights, freedom of expression and association, freedom of religion or belief, women's and children's rights and accountability for human rights violations.

3. EU Work at Multilateral Level

Human rights are at the heart of multilateralism and are a strong component of the United Nations (UN) system. In 2017, the EU remained a leading player in the universal promotion and protection of human rights at multilateral level, working in particular through the Third Committee of the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) and the United Nations Human Rights Council (HRC). Together with EU Member States and like-minded partners worldwide, the EU has continued to spearhead thematic and country-related initiatives. It has also given support to the activities of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), the Council of Europe (CoE), the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), and specialised UN agencies such as the International Labour Organisation (ILO).

The EU in United Nations Human Rights Fora

The EU supports the work of the UN human rights system on tackling human rights abuses and violations, including through country-specific statements and resolutions, commissions of inquiry, fact-finding missions and other special procedures, the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) and the active support of all those who defend against human rights abuses and violations. The EU is also committed to implementing the 'Responsibility to Protect', preventing and halting human rights violations in atrocity settings.

72nd session of the UNGA Third Committee

The session of the Third Committee of the UN General Assembly⁶ in October-November 2017 was very successful in terms of EU priorities. The EU-Japan resolution on the situation of human rights in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) was adopted without a vote, with two additional co-sponsors and valuable new language in the text; the EU-GRULAC (Latin America and Caribbean countries) resolution on the rights of the child and the EU-led resolution on freedom of religion or belief was adopted by consensus. The EU also gave its support to the important resolution on the situation of human rights in Syria.

⁶ All resolutions adopted can be found on the [UN webpage](#).

As is the case every year, the EU participated in most of the interactive dialogues with UN Special Procedures mandate holders, and EU Member States worked closely with the EU Delegation to the UN to support EU positions, including through burden-sharing on resolutions and statements.

United Nations Human Rights Council sessions in 2017

In 2017, the EU again demonstrated that it is a key player at the United Nations Human Rights Council⁷, and continued to demand an immediate end to horrific human rights abuses and the prosecution of those responsible for them.

At the 34th session of the Human Rights Council in March 2017, the EU saw all four resolutions it was presenting, on the rights of the child, freedom of religion or belief, Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK), and Myanmar/Burma, adopted without a vote. The resolution on the human rights situation in the DPRK, led by the EU and Japan, extended the mandate of the Special Rapporteur and followed up on key recommendations from the report by the Group of Independent Experts on Accountability, including a decision to strengthen the capacity of the OHCHR and its office in Seoul, in order to reinforce the current monitoring and documentation efforts, establish a new central independent repository for evidence and documentation, and hire criminal justice and other experts. The resolution on the situation of human rights in Myanmar established an international fact-finding mission (FFM) and extended the mandate of the UN Special Rapporteur.

At the 35th session of the Human Rights Council in June 2017, the EU achieved most of its objectives, including extending the mandate of the Special Rapporteur on Belarus and dispatching an independent team to investigate the serious human rights violations in the Kasais (Democratic Republic of Congo). It also supported the consensual adoption of resolutions on violence and discrimination against women, on terrorism, and on child and forced marriage.

⁷ All resolutions adopted can be [found on the HRC webpage](#).

At the 36th session of the Human Rights Council (September 2017), the EU was successful in achieving its priorities, including renewing the mandate of the Commission of Inquiry in Burundi, as well as extending the fact-finding mission in Myanmar and supporting the resolution on Syria. It contributed to the decision to appoint a Group of Eminent International and Regional Experts to monitor and report on human rights violations, and to carry out a comprehensive examination of all alleged violations in Yemen, and to the adoption of the important resolution on cooperation with the UN, denouncing reprisals against those who cooperate with the UN. The longstanding EU priority of fighting the death penalty was well reflected in its support for the adoption of the annual resolution.

The EU in the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe

In the framework of the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), the EU continued to actively engage in dialogue and cooperation within the Human Dimension of the OSCE comprehensive concept of security. It called for full implementation of all commitments in the area of fundamental rights and freedoms and for respect for human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law and respect for human rights, including the rights of persons belonging to minorities and stressed the vital role of the implementation of these rights and freedoms for increasing European common security.

The EU further promoted the implementation of the EU priorities as set out in the EU Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy (2015-2019), especially fundamental freedoms, and undertook efforts to ensure they remain on the OSCE agenda.

The EU fully supported the valuable and productive work of the OSCE's autonomous institutions (Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR), Representative on Freedom of the Media and High Commissioner on National Minorities) and the OSCE's comprehensive election-related activities, in particular through engaging with the electoral observation missions by ODIHR and the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly. In addition, the EU supported the work carried out by ODIHR to assist OSCE participating states in implementing ODIHR election monitoring recommendations.

The EU in the Council of Europe

In 2017, the EU continued supporting the Council of Europe (CoE) in defending and disseminating the ideas, spirit, ambitions and values which have taken root firmly in Europe: human rights, democracy and rule of law. This partnership is based on three pillars: high-level political dialogue, legal cooperation and financial support. The joint-programmes between the CoE and EU cover cooperation in the EU enlargement region, the Eastern Partnership and Southern Mediterranean countries. For example, the EU/CoE Horizontal Facility is a joint initiative to assist partners in the Western Balkans and Turkey in addressing challenges in the areas of rule of law and human rights. The initiative supports reforms of the judiciary, fight against corruption and organised crime, protection of the rights of vulnerable groups and the promotion of anti-discrimination policies.

Throughout its relations with the CoE, the EU continued to foster cooperation with civil society, to mainstream Gender equality and women's empowerment into all areas, to promote effective youth policies, education and training as well as accelerating the implementation of the Youth, Peace and Security agenda and to address migration, with a particular attention on the needs of migrants in vulnerable situations: women at risk, children, people with disabilities, people who are discriminated against on any basis and victims of violence and of trafficking in human beings.

Finally, the EU strongly supports the role of the European Court of Human Rights and the CoE convention system as the principal instruments for defending human rights in Europe.

The EU in the International Labour Organisation

In 2017, the EU actively participated in the International Labour Conference and the work of the Governing Body of the International Labour Office, in particular for the adoption of a 'recommendation on employment and decent work for peace and resilience', on five-year plans of action on fair and effective labour migration governance and on fundamental principles and rights at work. Furthermore, the EU contributed to the review of International Labour Standards on Occupational Safety and Health and actively contributed to outcomes in G20⁸ and G7⁹ on the promotion of decent work, with a particular focus on shaping the world of work for an inclusive future, reducing gender gaps, promoting occupational safety and health and diminishing inequalities.

4. Democracy and Elections

Elections

Election Observation

The EU institutions work in close cooperation on democracy support activities in order to strengthen democratic institutions and the participation of citizens in the formulation of policies across the world.

Election observation is a concrete and highly visible expression of the European Union's support of human rights, democracy and the rule of law. Through election missions, their follow-up and electoral assistance, the EU contributes to peaceful and inclusive societies as well as effective, accountable and inclusive institutions, as called for by Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 16.

⁸ The G20 (or G-20 or Group of Twenty) is an international forum for the governments and central bank governors from Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Canada, China, France, Germany, India, Indonesia, Italy, Japan, Mexico, the Russian Federation, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, South Korea, Turkey, the United Kingdom, the United States, and the European Union

⁹ The Group of Seven or G7 is a group consisting of Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, the United Kingdom and the United States.

EU Election Observation Missions (EOMs) are independent and apply systematic and rigorous high standards of integrity and independence, in line with the Declaration of Principles for International Election Observation (DoP). The missions are led by a Chief Observer, who is a Member of the European Parliament, and are the result of close cooperation between the different EU institutions. The EU also cooperates closely with all international observer groups committed to the implementation of the DoP.

During 2017, the EU continued to support electoral processes across the world by providing technical and financial assistance to election management bodies and civil society organisations engaged in election observation. Electoral assistance projects were supported in 20 countries.¹⁰ In some cases support was provided directly to the electoral management bodies to improve electoral procedures and voter registration. In others, the EU assisted work on reforming the electoral framework, strengthening women's participation in elections and on conflict prevention initiatives. The EU also gave its support to domestic observers in The Gambia, Gabon, Jordan and Kyrgyzstan.

¹⁰ Armenia, Cambodia, Comoros, Ghana, Guinea, Georgia, Jordan, Kenya, Kyrgyzstan, Liberia, Lebanon, Malawi, Myanmar, Nepal, Nigeria, Peru, Solomon Islands, Somalia, Zambia, and Zimbabwe

Election observation in The Gambia

In early 2017, The Gambia experienced the first democratic change of leadership since independence, ending 22 years of authoritarian rule under former President Yahya Jammeh and opening a new chapter in the relations between the EU and The Gambia. Opposition candidate Adama Barrow won presidential elections on 1 December 2016 against incumbent President Jammeh. After weeks of political stalemate, Adama Barrow was inaugurated in temporary exile in Senegal on 19 January and returned to The Gambia a week later, when former President Jammeh left the country under domestic and international pressure.

The EU committed to supporting the democratic transition under the new government's agenda of strengthening democratic institutions in full respect of human rights and the rule of law. The EU also stepped up its development co-operation and its assistance to the country. The EU deployed the first ever fully-fledged Election Observation Mission (EOM) to the Gambia, headed by Chief Observer member of European Parliament (MEP) Miroslav Poche, for parliamentary elections on 12 April 2017. The Mission was very well received by the government and the population, as it contributed to fostering trust in the democratic mechanisms in a politically divided country. The Mission welcomed the peaceful atmosphere in which the elections were conducted, commending the electoral authorities for delivering a well-administered process.

The election results gave a strong mandate to President Barrow and his government to pursue his reform agenda of fostering democracy, peace, reconciliation, the respect of human rights and the rule of law. The analysis and recommendations made by the Mission aim to feed into the government's reform agenda.

In 2017, the EU also continued to support electoral processes by deploying Election Observation Missions and smaller Election Expert Missions (EEMs). EU Election Observation Missions were deployed in Honduras, Kenya, Liberia, Nepal, The Gambia, Timor-Leste and Kosovo¹¹. In addition, Election Expert Missions were deployed in Algeria, Angola, Cambodia, Honduras, Kenya, Myanmar, Papua New Guinea and Palestine.¹² Finally, electoral follow-up missions were deployed to Malawi, the Maldives, Nigeria and Peru.

Follow-up on Electoral Missions

In the broader context of its policy of democracy support, the EU is committed to the effective and systematic follow-up of electoral missions in order to ensure their long-term impact. The reinforced work on the follow-up of recommendations is in line with the main guiding principles of EU external action: to increase coherence between EU policies and EU instruments. In 2017, the EU published the brochure 'Beyond Election Day: Best Practices for Follow-up to EU Election Observation Missions'¹³ which gives an overview of the tools and best practices for an effective implementation of the recommendations of EU EOMs and EEMs. The brochure was officially presented at the European Development Days in Brussels in June.

As a global political and development actor with an extensive network of delegations worldwide, the EU is in a unique position to promote the implementation of the election missions' recommendations. The EOM and EEM recommendations are regularly raised in political dialogues with partner countries and they contribute to shaping EU election assistance. Furthermore, the EU and its Member States aim to enhance cooperation on follow-up and to strengthen partnerships with other organisations working on elections, human rights, civil society, development, democratisation and peacebuilding. In 2017, cooperation with the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) and the Council of Europe was enhanced to follow up on EOM recommendations in the Western Balkans and the EU's Eastern Neighbourhood.

¹¹ This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSCR 1244 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo Declaration of Independence.

¹² This designation shall not be construed as recognition of a State of Palestine and is without prejudice to the individual positions of the Member States on this issue.

¹³ [Beyond Election Day: Best practices for follow-up to EU Election Observation Missions \(2017\)](#)

Involving civil society organisations in the implementation of such recommendations is essential for their adoption at local level and in order to ensure continuous follow-up. The EU supports advocating electoral reform through citizen election observer groups. In 2017, it developed a guide and methodology for training domestic observers to follow up recommendations issued by their organisations or international observers. Observers in Kyrgyzstan have been trained in this methodology and the guide will be launched and rolled out in 2018.

Democracy

Following up on the 2009 Council conclusions on Democracy Support in the EU's External Relations¹⁴, which called for an increased coherence and impact of the EU's democracy assistance, the EU and its Member States have conducted a pilot exercise on democracy support.¹⁵ The pilot exercise on democracy support reached its final phase in 2017, following the adoption of Democracy Action Plans in 11 pilot delegations in third countries. On the basis of this exercise, best practices and recommendations have been identified. The thematic areas identified as key for democratic reform, and therefore the focus of EU democracy support, include transparency and accountability of public affairs management, citizens' participation in policy making, civic education, enhanced cooperation with political actors such as political parties and parliaments, and support to independent media. Special attention should be given to the democratic participation of women and youth and to the impact of new technologies on democracy, and civil and political rights.

The conclusion of the pilot exercise has coincided with the mid-term review of the EU External Financing Instruments. This has provided an opportunity for enhancing coherence between political analysis and programming with a view to mainstreaming democracy in all instruments and increasing the impact of the EU's financial assistance to third countries.

¹⁴ Council conclusions on Democracy Support in the EU's External Relations, 17 November 2009

¹⁵ An initial pilot exercise was carried out from 2011-2013 in 9 EU Delegations (Benin, Bolivia, Ghana, Lebanon, Maldives, Mongolia, Kyrgyzstan, Philippines, and Solomon Islands); the second generation pilot was launched in 2014 in 11 Delegations (Georgia, Republic of Moldova, Tunisia, Morocco, Malawi, Mozambique, Tanzania, Fiji, Timor Leste, Myanmar/Burma, and Paraguay).

The EU supported initiatives aimed at deepening democracy in partner countries, launching comprehensive democratic governance programmes in Jordan, Nigeria and Pakistan, which encompass assistance to electoral bodies, national parliaments, political parties and civil society. It will launch a similar comprehensive project in Sierra Leone in 2018.

Technical assistance was provided to South Africa's Department of Justice and Constitutional Development, to meet its reporting obligations under the multilateral and regional treaties. Similar support was provided to Peru's parliamentary commission working on electoral reform.

Parliamentary Elections in Armenia

On 2 April 2017, parliamentary elections took place under a new Electoral Code which was significantly improved due to the efforts of the European Union (safeguards promoted by the EU). The EU provided important funding for the new voter authentication devices (VADs) together with Germany and UK which contributed to a very good conduct of the technical aspects on the Election Day, preventing multiple and carousel voting. The EU was put at the centre of international efforts in Armenia and it provided for a good example of a positive use of the EU taxpayers' money. The OSCE/ODIHR final report said the elections were well-administered and that fundamental freedoms were generally respected. At the same time, it noted that there were credible and widespread allegations of vote buying, pressure on public servants including in schools and hospitals, and of voters to vote for certain parties.

In 2017, the EU continued to support parliaments as key components of democratic political systems. The European Parliament offered assistance to the parliaments of a number of partner countries, in the form of study visits, seminars and conferences, and peer-to-peer exchanges on topics such as relations between the legislature and the executive, the budget cycle, the work of the committees, or relations between political groups.

A Tunisian week was organised by the European Parliament, hosting a large delegation from the Tunisian Assemblée des Représentants du Peuple (ARP). Discussions included relations between executive and legislature; the role of women in politics, together with the Women Political Leaders Global Forum; the role of parliamentarians in strengthening transparency; and parliamentary relations with civil society. A Young Political Leaders seminar was also organised including participants from the HR/VP Mogherini's 'Young MED Voices Plus Initiative', implemented by the Anna Lindh Foundation.

With the aim of supporting representative democracy and political pluralism, the EU also launched a global pilot programme to support political parties in 2017. Five projects will be implemented in Malawi, Bolivia, Morocco, Benin, Paraguay, Mongolia, Moldova, Tunisia, Kyrgyzstan and Georgia in the coming years, with the specific objectives of empowering young women to take an active role in the life of political parties; supporting political parties in improving their governance, transparency, accountability and outreach to citizens (particularly women and youth); and promoting inter-party dialogues on the legal, financial and/or policy framework affecting political parties as well as on political party financing.

In 2017, the EU worked to increase the role of the civil society organisations in advocating for accountability, transparency and participatory decision-making. It supported civil society organisations in Malaysia and Peru monitoring local service delivery and advocating for improving services and their transparency.

The #EU4Democracy campaign

In September and October, 26 EU delegations in countries around the world, including Brazil, Jordan, Nigeria, Uganda, Uzbekistan and Timor Leste, participated in a public diplomacy campaign organised around the International Day of Democracy (15 September) and the International Day on Universal Access to Information (28 September). The campaign, entitled EU4Democracy, focused on promoting the role of citizens, civil society, media and other stakeholders in advocating democratic accountability and access to information. In some places roundtables and writing competitions involving students, youth and other citizens were organised. In others, a 'Democracy Wall' was installed where students expressed in writing or graphic art what democracy means for them. The campaign was prominent in the media and especially vivid on social media, under the hashtags #EU4Democracy and #MyDemocracyIs. The campaign was also echoed by a conference marking the International Day of Democracy hosted by the European Parliament in Brussels on 27 September. The EU4Democracy campaign in EU delegations will be repeated next year.

5. Civil Society and Human Rights Defenders

The EU believes that an empowered and resilient civil society, in all its diversity, is a crucial component of any democracy. A clear indication of the EU's strong commitment to the empowerment of civil society is reflected in recent EU policies: The European Parliament Human Rights Sub-Committee's report¹⁶ on the EU's resolution on addressing shrinking civil society space in developing countries was adopted with a huge majority. The European Commission also published a staff working document in 2017 on the EU's Engagement with Civil Society in External Relations¹⁷ to follow up the 2012 communication on the same subject.¹⁸

The 19 June 2017 EU Council conclusions on 'EU engagement with civil society in external relations' have strong wording on the shrinking space phenomenon.¹⁹ The Council conclusions reaffirmed that civil society organisations (CSOs) are both actors of governance and development actors in their own right and are, as such, key partners for the successful implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the EU Global Strategy on Foreign and Security Policy adopted in 2016 that states that the EU “The EU will invest in pivotal non-state actors. We will sharpen the means to protect and empower civic actors, notably human rights defenders, sustaining a vibrant civil society worldwide.”

¹⁶ European Parliament resolution of 3 October 2017 on addressing shrinking civil society space in developing countries (2016/2324(INI))

¹⁷ Commission Staff Working Document, Report on EU engagement with Civil Society in External Relations, 8341/1/17, 3 May 2017

¹⁸ The roots of democracy and sustainable development: Europe's engagement with Civil Society in external relations, Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions, (COM(2012) 492).

¹⁹ EU engagement with civil society in external relations - Council conclusions, 10279/17, 19 June 2017

The June 2017 joint communication on a Strategic Approach to Resilience in the EU's External Action²⁰ underlines the link between inclusive and participatory societies, and sustainable development and the prevention of violent conflict. It argues for particular attention to be given to the involvement of communities and civil society stakeholders, and it sets out future work on an atrocity prevention toolkit.

During 2017, human rights defenders (HRDs) continued to face reprisals because of their legitimate work in every region of the world. For example, the situation of human rights defenders addressing environmental issues also deteriorated during 2017 as reflected at the observations and findings of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders addressing environmental and land issues and corporate responsibility. Environmental rights defenders were targeted and in a significant number of cases killed in a range of countries when advocating against unsustainable exploitation of natural resources or raising awareness on environmental degradation. The grave concerns about the human rights violations against human rights defenders working in this field, including indigenous peoples, prompted a specific lot under the 2017 European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR) global call for proposals to be allocated to supporting human rights defenders in the area of land-related rights and indigenous peoples, in the context of inter alia 'land grabbing' and climate change.

²⁰ Joint Communication to the European Parliament and the Council, A Strategic Approach to Resilience in the EU's external action, JOIN(2017) 21, 7 June 2017

Environmental defenders in Vietnam

In April 2016 a spillage of chemicals in the sea involving a foreign investor (Formosa Plastic Group), resulted in hundreds of tons of dead fish washed up along a 200 km section of the central Vietnamese coastline, leading to huge damage for the local fishing industry.

Since the incident, thousands of people have held public demonstrations to request transparency on the environmental impact assessment, on the compensation claims criteria and procedures, and overall demanding a cleaner environment. Overseas Vietnamese also joined in protest around the world. Some environmental rights activists have been harassed, arrested and sentenced to several years of detention. UN human rights experts have called for the release of the individuals jailed for writing about and reacting to the pollution incident.

At its latest session of the EU-Vietnam Human Rights Dialogue held on 1 December 2017 in Hanoi, the EU reiterated its request for all Vietnamese citizens detained for publicly and peacefully expressing their opinions to be released. The EU stressed the need to respect the rights to freedom of expression, association and assembly and called on Vietnam to abide by its international commitments.

EU officials and Member State representatives in third countries continued their efforts to further strengthen EU actions in support of human rights defenders in 2017. Working on the basis of the 2004 EU Guidelines on HRDs, EU officials took action through, for example, the condemnation of threats and attacks against human rights defenders, démarches and public statements, trial monitoring and prison visits.

The promotion of partnerships with third countries' civil society has been strengthened. In March 2017, the Guidance Note on Human Rights Defenders, which aims at providing guidance for EU diplomatic staff on some practical aspects of the implementation of the guidelines on the ground, was redistributed to all EU Delegation's focal points on human rights. A request was also distributed to Delegations that are in charge of engaging with civil society on the ground and helping to protect groups and individuals in vulnerable situations, asking them to update their webpages with the name and contact details of the Local Liaison Officer on Human Rights.

The EU held consultations with civil society and human rights defenders in Brussels and abroad prior to conducting a number of human rights dialogues, and held debriefings afterwards. In addition, ad hoc civil society organisation seminars and consultations, financed under the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR), were organised in the framework of the official human rights dialogues held with third countries. Annual meetings between EU diplomats and HRD organisations continued to be held in third countries during 2017, increasing the visibility of human rights defenders and allowing for in-depth analysis of their working environment.

During 2017, HRD issues and cases were raised in human rights dialogues, subcommittee meetings and consultations with third countries. In some cases, the EU handed over lists of individual cases and requested written responses. HRD cases were addressed in local and HQ statements in a number of countries, and in statements in multilateral fora.

EU Support to Civil Society in Bolivia

The 'Citizen Platform for Access to Justice and Human Rights' was created within the scope of the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR) Project 'Sociedad Civil en Accion: Acceso a la Justicia y Defensa Legal de los Derechos Humanos de los Privados de Libertad', focused on the promotion of democratic participation of civil society in the reform of penal justice. The Platform gathers 32 civil society organisations engaged in the promotion of access to justice and the respect of the human rights of detainees. The platform has played an active role in the national judicial summit of 2016, as the main interlocutor between the State of Bolivia and civil society, and recently promoted a wider articulation, the 'Citizen Initiative for Monitoring Judicial Elections' , regrouping more than 40 CSOs. The aim of the 'Iniciativa' is to actively participate in judicial reform and the implementation of the post-summit agenda.

The situation of HRDs is regularly addressed in EU statements in multilateral fora, including at the Human Rights Council, the Council of Europe and the OSCE Permanent Council. In March 2017, the EU supported the Human Rights Council resolution on the mandate of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders, which was adopted without a vote.

The Council Working Party on Human Rights (COHOM) regularly engaged with civil society representatives and systematically debriefed them on meeting discussions and its conclusions.

Support to human rights defenders in situations where they are most at risk is the first objective of the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR) Regulation for 2014-2020. An EIDHR global call for proposal with a total value of EUR 5 million was launched in August 2015, aimed at providing support to human rights defenders working at grassroots level.

The EIDHR Regulation²¹ foresees the possibility for the Commission to provide small grants for up to EUR 10 000, on an ad hoc basis to HRDs in need of urgent support. This arrangement has been in place since 2010 and the increasing frequency of requests has confirmed its success. More than 500 HRDs and organisations in over 30 countries have received this type of direct support. The grants have been used to pay for legal fees, medical care, installation of security equipment, emergency relocation and a variety of other practical measures.

The EU Human Rights Defender Mechanism, entitled 'Protect Defenders', with a budget of EUR 15 million, is managed by a consortium of 12 independent international non-governmental organisations (NGOs). Activities under the Mechanism include urgent support, including physical/digital protection; legal support; medical support; trial and prison monitoring; a permanent 24-hour helpline for human rights defenders; medium-term support including monitoring of HRDs situations, early warning, reinforcement of capacities, and training on risk prevention and security; and long-term support including support to national networks, advocacy and lobbying. Since January 2016, ProtectDefenders.eu has recorded over 850 documented alerts. Alerts are based on verified information concerning violations affecting human rights defenders.

On 10 December 2017, the EU and its Member States joined the United Nations in its calls to 'stand up for someone's rights' to mark Human Rights Day. EU Delegations around the world marked the occasion with a variety of events, and a declaration by HR/VP Mogherini drew attention to the importance of protecting human rights defenders.

²¹ 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

6. Freedom of Expression

Freedom of expression and freedom of the press are under increasing attack around the world, including in Europe. The last decade has seen a significant increase in different forms of violence and abuse against journalists and other media actors. Tactics to silence critical voices range from physical attacks, intimidation and harassment to targeted surveillance and cyberbullying. In 2014, the Council of the European Union adopted the EU Human Rights Guidelines on Freedom of Expression Online and Offline which spell out how the basic principles should be incorporated in EU external action in partner countries around the world.

As in previous years, the EU has continued to raise its voice by condemning threats and violations against journalists and media professionals offline and in cyberspace. Numerous public statements and démarches have been made to promote freedom of expression and call for greater protection of journalists' rights and media freedom. The HR/VP Mogherini made a declaration on World Press Freedom Day (3 May 2017) opposing "any legislation, regulation or political pressure that limits freedom of expression", and on the International Day to End Impunity for Crimes against Journalists (2 November 2017), called on "state authorities to uphold their international obligations by protecting journalists against intimidation, threats and violence, irrespective of their source". On several occasions, HR/VP Mogherini has participated in urgent debates in the European Parliament to defend the rights of individual journalists facing serious threats in the exercise of their profession.

The EU has systematically raised the issue of freedom of expression at different levels of political dialogue, including in its human rights dialogues and consultations with partner countries. The EU Special Representative (EUSR) for Human Rights raises issues related to freedom of expression and freedom of the media during official visits to partner countries and in human rights dialogues.

In addition, the EU continues to provide financial support for projects and activities in this field, including training, capacity building and protection of journalists, bloggers, human rights defenders, media regulators etc. as well as support to legal and administrative reforms in the media sector and also promotes access to information and the production of unbiased media programmes. These activities are financed by both the geographic programmes and instruments, for example the Development Cooperation Instrument (DCI) or the European Development Found (EDF) or the European Neighbourhood Instrument (ENI), and by thematic instruments of EU development cooperation.. Special mention should be made of the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights, which has financed the largest number of projects related to freedom of expression. The EU mechanism for HRDs, 'ProtectDefenders.eu' has also granted emergency support for journalists and other media actors.

The European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR) has also awarded financial support under a 3 year delegation support programme on 'Media and freedom of expression in the framework of EU democracy support' (2017-2019) to assist both EU Delegations and media actors in developing countries in implementing the EU Human Rights Guidelines on Freedom of Expression Online and Offline. This new instrument has been used in 2017, *inter alia* to provide technical assistance in The Gambia, for an assessment of the media landscape; in Honduras, to improve data journalism; and in Indonesia, to address issues of hate speech in collaboration with local universities.

In the Western Balkans, the EU mobilised new funding under the Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance (IPA) to strengthen independent media. New EU funds will provide training for young and mid-career journalists across the region, thereby boosting investigative journalism that contributes to reconciliation. A new technical assistance programme for Public Service Broadcasters will support regional co-production of investigative journalism, media content for youth and digitalisation. In addition, to support independent media, new actions with the European Endowment for Democracy will benefit start-ups for new independent media outlets and small-scale initiatives. Freedom of expression and media components are also increasingly integrated into larger programmes in the field of democratic governance, which are funded under bilateral cooperation envelopes; as in the case of Sierra Leone, where the reform of the legal framework for elections includes a media component; or in Mozambique, where media capacity building of media is addressed under a sector programme aimed at consolidating democracy.

The EU also continued to work at multilateral level in order to ensure that freedom of expression remains a prominent issue on the UN agenda. The EU has been actively participating in all relevant multilateral fora and supporting the work of the special rapporteurs with related mandates from the UN and regional organisations. The EU has been actively engaged in debates on freedom of expression online within the Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN), the Internet Governance Forum (IGF), the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) process, the Freedom Online Coalition and in the framework of EU Cyber Dialogues with third countries, such as the United States.

Media freedom and pluralism are also under threat within the EU. While it is primarily for Member States to guarantee media freedom and pluralism at national level, the European Commission is taking a number of measures to support media freedom and pluralism across the EU.

Media4Democracy in Honduras

Media4Democracy, an EU-funded Technical Assistance Facility helping EU Delegations to implement the EU Human Rights Guidelines on Freedom of Expression Online and Offline, deployed two experts to Honduras in July 2017. One Expert conducted intensive data-journalism training for 16 journalists, whilst the other supported the Institute for Access to Public Information (IAIP), to improve its technical functions and the ease of public use of its information portal. The data journalism workshops brought rapid results; participants published stories using data techniques learnt during the workshop.

The Commission has funded the establishment of the European Centre for Press and Media Freedom (ECPMF), based in Leipzig, to address media freedom violations in EU Member States and beyond, for example by providing legal assistance to journalists under threat. Also thanks to EU funding, Index on Censorship has created the 'Mapping Media Freedom' platform, to disseminate knowledge about media freedom violations in Europe. The International Press Institute is also active with an EU-funded project which aims to address the risk that the abuse of defamation laws, and of criminal defamation laws in particular, poses to the public's right to information in Europe.

Another EU-financed project is the Media Pluralism Monitor (MPM). The MPM measures risks to media pluralism across all Member States. Over the past three years, the European University Institute (EUI) implemented MPM in all Member States in an independent manner and has published the latest results in May 2017. The 2017 MPM implementation also covers Serbia, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, and Turkey, and its results are expected in mid- 2018.

In order to increase the proactive prevention, detection and removal of illegal content inciting hatred, violence and terrorism online, the European Commission adopted a communication on 'tackling illegal content online, towards enhanced responsibility of online platforms' on 28 September 2017. It expects online platforms to take swift action, in particular in the area of terrorism and illegal hate speech, which is already illegal under EU law, both online and offline.

7. Freedom of Conscience, Religion or Belief

The EU is determined to continue promoting freedom of religion or belief (FoRB) as a right to be exercised by everyone everywhere, based on the principles of equality, non-discrimination and universality.

In 2017, the EU continued strengthening the implementation of the Guidelines on the Promotion and Protection of Freedom of Religion or Belief and carrying out the commitments under action the EU Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy 2015-2019. Their implementation remained a key priority for EU action, which was strengthened through the EU Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy 2015-2019.

During 2017 the EU regularly raised FoRB at different levels of political dialogue, including in 15 of its human rights dialogues and in consultations with partner countries. The EU also reacted with public statements condemning restrictions to freedom of religion in Russia and Indonesia, but also used private démarches to raise restrictions of FoRB in several partner countries.

The EUSR Stavros Lambrinidis continued to be actively engaged in the issue of FoRB and the promotion of EU Guidelines in his official visits, in his meetings with government officials in third countries, and at the UN. He has also placed special emphasis on the implementation of the UN Rabat Plan of Action that includes positive elements for addressing 'hate speech' and for countering violence perpetrated in the name of religion, most recently in 2017 during the Madrid Conference on ethnic and religious violence in the Middle East in May 2017, and the High-Level Forum on Combating Anti-Muslim Discrimination and Hatred, held in New York on 17 January. This forum mobilised a broad spectrum of faith-based civil society to discuss concrete and innovative ways of combating anti-muslim discrimination. He also continued engaging with the UN Special Rapporteur on FoRB and met with international organisations, and with a number of representatives of religious or belief groups.

The European External Action Service's (EEAS) stepped up its efforts to raise awareness of the Guidelines and FoRB-related issues among its staff and representatives of the EU Member States by organising various training sessions and workshops: most recently the EEAS training module on Religion and Foreign Policy, Brussels, 13 and 14 June 2017, and the Human Rights and Democratisation training on 19 June 2017. The EEAS also runs broader training modules on Political Islam, Islam in Politics with focus, inter alia, on minority rights within a Muslim majority setting, with the most recent session taking place on 18 October 2017.

In the course of 2017 the EEAS Task Force on religion and culture hosted a number of discussions on the place of religion in society. The EEAS also participated in and co-chaired the Transatlantic Policy Network on Religion and Diplomacy (TPNRD). A number of concrete initiatives combining FoRB and the wider agenda of diversity and tolerance have grown out of this network, building on and giving further momentum to already existing work and dialogues with the OSCE, UN and Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC).

Ban of Jehovah's Witnesses activities in Russia

On 17 July 2017 the Russian Supreme Court upheld its previous decision to liquidate all legal entities of Jehovah's Witnesses (JW) in Russia, terminate their activity and confiscate their property, alleging extremist activity. The decision confirms the ban on the peaceful worship of Jehovah's Witnesses throughout the country.

The EU undertook a number of actions in support of the Jehovah's Witnesses and urged the Russian authorities to ensure freedom of religion. The EU Delegation to Russia met with representatives of JW in Moscow on 4 April and 13 July 2017 and kept in close contact with them. European External Action Service officials have also met with representatives of the JW in Brussels. EU and Member States' diplomats attended several sessions of the Supreme Court hearing including the hearing of the appeal on 17 July 2017.

On 24 April 2017 the HR/VP Mogherini raised this issue, as well as other human rights concerns, when she met with Russian Foreign Minister Lavrov in Moscow. The EU issued statements condemning the harassment and persecution against Jehovah's Witnesses at the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe's Permanent Council meetings of 30 March, 27 April and 20 July 2017 as well as in the Council of Europe's Committee of Ministers on 5 April 2017.

The EU will continue urging the Russian authorities to ensure that JW, along with other religious groups, are able to peacefully enjoy freedom of assembly without interference, as guaranteed by the Constitution of the Russian Federation, Russia's international commitments and international human rights standards.

On the Commission side, the work of Mr. Jan Figel, Special Envoy (SE) for the promotion of FoRB outside the EU, has played an important role in raising awareness of FoRB and support for the implementation of the EU Guidelines on it. The Guidelines provide the backbone for the SE's action at various levels, notably support to EU Delegations and country stakeholders implementing the policy, engagement in international processes and dialogue with civil society and religious actors. This is illustrated by his country visits, notably in Iraq, Sudan, Senegal and Pakistan, as well as in increased visibility for FoRB in the development cooperation scene: for example, a special thematic prize of the Lorenzo Natali Media Prize was awarded on FoRB during the European Development Days. The Media Prize is an award granted by the European Commission to journalists from all over the world for their outstanding works on development.

Regarding implementation, the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights has been mobilised for FoRB-related activities in all regions of the world with at least 45 specific FoRB projects, accounting for at least EUR 17 million in the period 2007-17. Moreover, the 2017 global call for proposals published in September 2017 also addresses freedom of religion or belief, in particular, the contribution of civil society to the implementation of the 2013 EU Guidelines. These include, inter alia, the promotion of dialogue, and an emphasis on the role of religious and other leaders in these processes (indicative amount EUR 5 million). The projects will be selected in 2018.

The Commission's call for proposals with the title: 'Intercultural Dialogue and Culture' was published in March 2017. This programme envisages cooperation with partner countries on intercultural dialogue for peaceful inter-community relations 'using intercultural dialogue as a tool to increase understanding and tolerance'. One of the specific objectives of the call is to enhance cultural pluralism and intercultural understanding, including aspects relating to religion or belief. Selected projects will be contracted by the end of 2017.

The EU continued to work to ensure that FoRB remains prominent on the UN agenda, and the EU was the lead sponsor of a Resolution on FoRB both in the Human Rights Council (HRC) and the UN General Assembly (third committee). In November 2017, the EU FoRB resolution to the UNGA 72 was adopted by consensus with 78 cosponsors – three more than in 2016. The FoRB resolution identifies obstacles to the enjoyment of the right to freedom of religion or belief and presents recommendations on ways to overcome these obstacles. It also calls upon states to protect, respect and promote the right to freedom of religion or belief.

During the March 2017 HRC the FoRB resolution was also adopted by consensus with minor technical updates, as a result of parallel negotiations with the OIC on the Resolution 'Combating intolerance, negative stereotyping, stigmatization, discrimination, incitement to violence and violence against persons based on religion or belief'.

In the margins of the Human Rights Council's 34th session in March 2017, the EU, in cooperation with the Special Rapporteur and the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights organised an event on FoRB entitled 'Towards an agenda for implementation'. The panel offered the opportunity to take stock of the progress made to advance the enjoyment of the freedom of religion or belief, and to identify a way forward to boost the enjoyment of this fundamental freedom.

8. Torture and Other Ill-Treatment

In line with the EU Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy (Action 13) and the Guidelines on EU Policy towards third countries on torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, the EU further intensified its work against torture and ill-treatment around the world in 2017.

The HR/VP Mogherini issued a statement on the International Day in Support of Victims of Torture on 26 June 2017. She highlighted that fighting torture is not only about raising awareness but also about effective action. She underlined the EU's continuous work in the promotion of victims' rights to rehabilitation, the introduction of safeguards at all stages of deprivation of freedom, and the effective and independent investigation of torture allegations. She expressed the belief that torture can be prevented and eradicated through political will and joint work with international and regional partners, and recalled the EU's support for the objective of the Convention against Torture Initiative to achieve global ratification and implementation of the UN Convention against Torture by 2024. Several EU Delegations also organised specific events on this occasion to raise awareness of the importance of combating torture.

The EU Special Representative for Human Rights contributed to the fight against torture during his visits around the world, raising the issue publicly as well as in bilateral conversations with other leaders. He also took part in the civil society seminar on 'tackling torture in Africa and Europe' held in Banjul, The Gambia, on 28 -29 October 2017, in the margins of the EU-AU human rights dialogue. The seminar provided tangible recommendations for action by EU and AU officials in helping others to combat torture.

In its human rights dialogues, the EU continued to systematically raise torture and ill-treatment, in particular urging countries to ratify and fully implement the Convention against Torture and its Optional Protocol; fully align their legislation with the Convention; comply with recommendations from national and international monitoring mechanisms; and ensure that all reports of torture or ill-treatment are properly and impartially investigated and prosecuted, and victims afforded redress. When relevant, the EU also addressed issues of enforced disappearances and secret detention. During these dialogues, the EU offered concrete assistance to countries in their efforts to eradicate torture and ill-treatment depending on their needs, including financial support.

The EU continued to promote judicial reform in several countries, aiming to secure an independent justice sector, access to justice and improved prison conditions through both political dialogue and financial support. Assistance was provided for the training of police and all other staff involved in the penal system, which covered human rights and detection and reporting of alleged torture, including proper use of the Istanbul Protocol.

The global Alliance for Torture-Free Trade was formally launched on 18 September 2017 during the UNGA week in New York as the result of a joint effort between the EU, Argentina and Mongolia and with the participation of 58 countries from around the world, including all EU Member States. Since 2005, the EU has had the most advanced legislation on controlling trade in goods used for capital punishment, torture or other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment.²² In order to follow up the implementation of this legislation the EU has also set up an Anti-Torture Coordination Group, composed of EU Member States and the European Commission, which met for the first time in July 2017. An initiative of Commissioner Malmström, the Alliance for Torture-Free Trade is an effort by countries all over the world, sharing the objectives set out in EU legislation, to promote the adoption of similar measures and enforcement systems to end trade in goods used for capital punishment and torture globally. The Alliance was formalised with the adoption of a political declaration.

The European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR) 2017 global call for proposals included a lot worth EUR 5 million covering the subject of enforced disappearances and extrajudicial killings. Projects financed under the EIDHR also promoted capacity building and the exchange of best practices in torture prevention. Examples include the recently started project 'Civil Society United against Torture' project, which intends to empower national CSOs to advance the implementation of the Convention Against Torture, in particular in challenging environments and for sectors with specific or multiple vulnerabilities; and the project 'establishing effective controls in the use and trade of torture technologies as a tool to fight torture and support remedy and reparation', which also recently launched for a duration of 36 months.

²² Regulation (EC) 1236/2005, of 27 June 2005, concerning trade in certain goods which could be used for capital punishment, torture, or other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.

9. The Death Penalty

In 2017, working for global abolition of the death penalty remained at the very heart of the EU's human rights priorities. Throughout the year, the EU continued to voice its strong opposition to the death penalty as a cruel, inhuman and degrading punishment, violating the right to life, while not deterring crime more effectively than imprisonment. Moreover, execution is irreversible while errors are inevitable in any legal system.

More than half a century after the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the trend towards worldwide abolition of the death penalty is evident. Almost three quarters of the world's countries (142 at the end of 2017) have abolished the death penalty in law or in practice, and this number continues to increase.

The issue of capital punishment was consistently raised with retentionist countries and featured on the EU agendas of political dialogues or dedicated human rights dialogues. Based on the minimum standards defined by international law and the EU guidelines on the death penalty, the EU issued a number of public statements deploring the use of the death penalty, and called on the remaining retentionist countries to consider a moratorium. This was notably the case for Belarus, Indonesia, Iran, Japan, Malaysia, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Singapore, and the USA, with additional statements being issued and démarches carried out in other countries. The EU has put considerable emphasis on condemning the violation of minimum standards, stressing the inadmissibility of the use of death penalty for minors, for persons with intellectual disabilities, and for crimes which are not among the 'most serious', such as drug offences.

The EU continued to raise its opposition to the death penalty in all relevant multilateral fora, in particular at the UN, the OSCE and the Council of Europe.

To mark the European Day against the Death Penalty and the World Day against the Death Penalty on 10 October 2017, 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. Numerous EU Delegations marked this significant date by organising debates, publishing op-eds, and conducting other public awareness activities.

Belarus is the only country in Europe that still applies the death penalty. The EU actively engaged with the Belarusian authorities on the death penalty and took action to raise awareness. During 2017, a number of high level meetings involving the Belarusian Parliament, central and regional authorities, NGOs and international experts were held to discuss the issue in public in Grodno and Brest.

Through local calls for proposals under the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR) financial instrument, the EU has funded three new projects supporting civil society organisations that are active in the fight against the death penalty in India, Kenya, and Morocco in 2017. The six projects selected in 2015 to receive a contribution from the EU of EUR 6.5 million through the global call for proposals under the same financial instrument, were still under implementation in 2017 in a variety of countries, including Indonesia, the USA, Cameroon, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Malaysia, Egypt, Somalia and Tunisia. Those projects covered training for the judiciary, public awareness-raising, improved monitoring, advocacy efforts, and stimulating a broader dialogue on the death penalty, including in relation to counter-terrorism and the fight against drugs.

10. Equality and Anti-Discrimination

Gender Equality

In 2017, the EU continued driving forward gender equality and girls' and women's empowerment, while globally leading the gender mainstreaming strategy towards more equal, secure, resilient, peaceful, prosperous and freer societies. The EU ensured development and implementation of gender-responsive and transformative policies as a key contribution to the successful achievement of the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals.

Gender issues were extensively and consistently raised in political dialogues, human rights dialogues and sub-committees, informal working groups and human rights-related discussions with partner countries. EU Delegations across the world carried out ad-hoc activities to promote, protect and fulfil girls' and women's rights, consistent with the human rights and democracy country strategies for the period 2016-2020, which included gender equality as one of the main priorities, or as an underlying priority. These activities included inter alia political démarches, public statements, regular consultations with local civil society actors, in particular women's organisations, private foundations, and the private sector, awareness-raising campaigns and advocacy events. Furthermore, specific initiatives were taken to contribute to eliminating all forms of sexual and gender-based violence, to address existing inequalities and entrenched discrimination against girls and women, and to promote their empowerment and their active, free and meaningful participation. With the adoption of the 2016 implementation report of the EU Gender Action Plan II 'Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment: Transforming the Lives of Girls and Women through EU External Relations 2016-2020', EU services and EU Delegations reported on progress achieved towards the following specific objectives: (i) ensuring girls' and women's physical and psychological integrity, (ii) promoting the economic and social rights and empowerment of girls and women, (iii) strengthening girls' and women's voice and participation, (iv) shifting the Commission services' and the European External Action Service's (EEAS) institutional culture to more effectively deliver on EU commitments.

The EU dedicated the year 2017 to European action to eliminate all forms of violence against women and girls, both in the public and private spheres. This action included the EU signature of the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (Istanbul Convention) as the first international legal instrument at EU level and the most far-reaching international treaty to combat violence against women, including domestic violence, as a human rights violation.

Debate on Violence against Women and Girls in Mauritius

Gender issues featured prominently in EU's public diplomacy with Mauritius. In the context of the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women and '16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence', the Delegation in Mauritius organised a forum debate on 'Stop Violence Against Women and Girls' on 29 November 2017. The event gathered all relevant stakeholders, including the new gender minister, representatives of police services and the office of the director of public prosecutions, for an open and frank discussion on gender issues.

Reflecting the need to upgrade the EU's commitment to multilateralism into a pro-active multilateral agenda, the EU was actively engaged with partner countries in multilateral fora to consistently contribute to advancing towards the achievement of gender equality, notably at the 61st session of the Commission on the Status of Women and quarterly sessions of the UN Human Rights Council as the key policy-making UN fora. Furthermore, the EU placed gender equality at the centre of working relations with multilateral partners, such as the OSCE, CoE, NATO, AU, OAS, ASEAN and OIC, as well as with the G7 and G20.

Within the comprehensive common framework of the New European Consensus on Development 'Our World, Our Dignity, Our Future', the EU reaffirmed its commitment to the promotion of women's and girls' rights, gender equality, the empowerment of girls and women and their protection as a priority across all areas of action. In this regard, the EU together with the UN launched a global, multi-year initiative named 'The Spotlight Initiative' to eliminate violence against women and girls in Asia, Africa, Latin-America, the Pacific and the Caribbean. With an unprecedented investment of EUR 500 million, the EU was the biggest investor in gender equality around the world.

Furthermore, the EU formally took over the leadership of 'Call to Action on Protection from Gender-Based Violence in Emergencies' (Call to Action), a multi-stakeholder global initiative supported by more than 70 governments, international organisations, and non-governmental organisations striving to make sure that gender-based violence (GBV) is addressed from the earliest onset of a crisis. The EU will be leading this initiative until the end of 2018. The main priorities of the EU's leadership of the Call to Action are: (1) increasing advocacy on the need to prevent and respond to GBV; (2) increasing focus on prevention of GBV in emergencies; (3) bringing the Call to Action to the field, where it can have the biggest impact; and (4) implementing commitments, following the Call to Action Roadmap 2016-2020. In 2017, the EU allocated nearly EUR 22 million in humanitarian aid to projects to address and prevent GBV. In addition, EUR 975 000 was allocated to the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) under the Enhanced Response Capacity Programme to operationalise the Call to Action at field-level.

Fundamentally transforming the way GBV is addressed in humanitarian action, this initiative drives change and fosters accountability by establishing specialised accessible GBV services and programmes, integrating and implementing actions to reduce and mitigate GBV risk across all levels and sectors of humanitarian response and mainstreaming gender equality and the empowerment of girls and women throughout humanitarian action.

Abolition of rape-marriage laws in Jordan and Tunisia

In July and August 2017, provisions in the Tunisian and Jordanian penal codes which allowed rapists to escape punishment by marrying their victims (art. 227 bis in Tunisia, art. 308 in Jordan) , were abolished and some related articles amended. In Tunisia, the parliament unanimously voted in favour of a new organic law outlawing all forms of violence against women, girls, and, under certain provisions, boys. The new legislation includes a series of measures ranging from prevention to criminal prosecution, protection and assistance for victims.

In both countries, those major legislative milestones were possible thanks also to EU combined efforts: political bilateral dialogue, public diplomacy, policy advocacy, coordination and information sharing with Member States and donors (e.g. UN Women) and support for CSOs.

The EU marked a series of special days through EU Statements in chronological order: the International Day of Zero Tolerance for Female Genital Mutilation, International Women's Day, International Day for the Elimination of Sexual Violence in Conflict and the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women by issuing ad hoc statements and by holding special events. EU services and EU Delegations once again proactively joined the UN Women international '16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence' campaign. It ran from 25 November (International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women) to 10 December (Human Rights Day), as part of the UN Secretary General's global UNiTE campaign, to galvanise action to end violence against women and girls around the world.

The EU continued to support women's active, free and meaningful participation in all efforts to maintain and promote peace and security. As an example, a project strengthening women's role in peace in Afghanistan aims to promote the implementation and monitoring of the Afghan National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security at the local and provincial level, supporting women to be actively involved in building a more peaceful Afghanistan.

The EU-funded 'OSCE Survey on the Well-being and Security of Women in South East and Eastern Europe' is a prime example of EU engagement to combat all forms of violence against women through interacting with other regional organisations, such as the OSCE.

As regards combating conflict-related sexual violence, a 2017 stocktaking of EU projects in the areas of deployment of EU Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) missions and operations showed 43 ongoing multi-year projects which address this issue, representing an overall value of EUR 43 million, as well as two relevant regional programmes of an overall value of EUR 8.5 million.

An EU action on 'Preventing Violent Extremism: A Gender Sensitive Approach', is under development and will be implemented in two pilot countries in the Middle-East and in Asia. Among other elements, the project will seek to strengthen in-country capacities to better understand and deal with the gender dynamics underpinning violent extremism, and support initiatives to tackle sexual and gender-based violence caused by terrorist and violent extremist groups.

In 2017, the European External Action Service's (EEAS) and Commission services completed a multi-year strategic reporting exercise on the implementation of EU commitments on women, peace and security, including on ending sexual violence in conflict.

The EEAS Principal Advisor on Gender (PAG) and on the implementation of UNSCR 1325 on Women, Peace and Security further strengthened synergies and improved coordination among the EU's internal/external work on gender equality, women's empowerment, and the women, peace and security agenda. The EEAS Principal Advisor continued to engage with key stakeholders, ranging from partner countries, international and regional mechanisms, to civil society, both bilaterally and in multilateral fora, to consistently advance EU priority engagement on gender equality, women's empowerment and the women, peace and security agenda.

The EU continued to promote gender equality as one of the founding principles of the European Union, primarily through the mainstreaming of gender perspectives in the context of Common Security and Defence Policy.

The 2017 Report of the Baseline Study on Integrating Human Rights and Gender into the European Union's Common Security and Defence Policy has emphasised the need for a more systematic and comprehensive approach to the integration of a gender perspective into CSDP activities, from analysis, to planning conduct and evaluation of EU operations and missions. Progress has already been made in establishing additional gender advisory capacity in civilian missions. Furthermore, the 'Generic Standards of Behaviour' for CSDP missions and operations were revised with strengthened provisions to prevent and address sexual exploitation and abuse, all forms of harassment, including sexual harassment and other forms of gender-based violence, and thus emphasising the EU's zero tolerance for all forms of discrimination and gender-based harassment and violence.

In addition, EU considerations on gender and women, peace and security, have increasingly been included into the established security and defence partnership structures, such as the EU-UN Steering Committee on Crisis Management and the EU-NATO common set of new proposals on the implementation of the Joint Declaration.

Children

In March 2017, the EU adopted revised EU Guidelines on the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of the Child. The revision which sets out the EU's overarching strategy aims to ensure that EU policies and actions support the strengthening of partner countries' systems, including child protection systems. This is the most effective way of ensuring all children are reached, including the most marginalised and those in vulnerable situations.

To mark the adoption, the EU in cooperation with Plan International organised #YouthTakeovers in over 20 EU Delegations worldwide, from Brazil to Bangladesh. This action enabled young people to take temporary control of the EU Delegation's social media accounts to speak up about children's rights and to give their opinions on matters which are important to them.

The EU is committed to encouraging and supporting the meaningful participation of children and young people. Youth was the guiding theme of the 5th African Union-European Union Summit held in November in Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire which included a "Youth Plug In" event that allowed for direct interaction with the leaders. A joint declaration outlines common priorities for the EU-Africa partnership in four strategic areas, including economic opportunities for youth.

In April, the European Commission issued a communication on the protection of children in migration.²³ The principle of protection of migrant and refugee children in full respect of the best interests of the child is a priority for the EU. As a follow-up to the communication on the protection of children in migration, the 11th European Forum on the rights of the child, held in November, was dedicated to children deprived of their liberty and alternatives to detention for children in conflict with the law, in the context of migration, children in institutions and children of prisoners.

Tackling violence against children in Brazil

The project 'Addressing violence against children and adolescents in situations of social vulnerability in Fortaleza' helped strengthen the competencies and articulation of the community and institutional actors of the Rights Guarantee System in Fortaleza, Ceará. The 4 schools participating recorded a 65% reduction of conflicts on average, 3700 students have access to mediation rooms and the methodology adopted will become a public educational policy.

²³ Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council, The protection of children in migration, COM(2017) 211 final, 12 April 2017

The EU is an important humanitarian actor in the fields of education and child protection in emergencies. Examples of actions to support the protection of children in humanitarian crises include the prevention of and response to violence, psycho-social support, education and emergency shelters for unaccompanied children. In 2017, the EU allocated 6 % of its humanitarian funding to education in emergency situations. EU humanitarian funding has supported the education of around 5 million children in 52 countries. An important part of the EU-led global initiative 'Call to Action on Protection from Gender-Based Violence in Emergencies' focus on children, as they are particularly vulnerable to such violence.

An EU project implemented by Save the Children defends Schools as Zones of Peace. This project supported by the EU humanitarian Programme Enhanced Response Capacity helps securing boys' and girls' protection at school, and limits that education is disrupted because of military use, occupation, attacks on schools, forced recruitment or classrooms used as storage for military or weaponry.

The ILO report 'Global Estimates of Child Labour, results and trends, 2012-2016', published in September 2017, estimates that worldwide 151.6 million children aged 5-17 are engaged in child labour, 72.5 million of whom are exposed to hazardous work, one of the worst forms of child labour, most of them in the agriculture sector. There is clear evidence that Target 8.7 of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development²⁴ will not be achieved unless efforts are dramatically and urgently increased.

²⁴ SDG 8.7: Take immediate and effective measures to eradicate forced labour, end modern slavery and human trafficking and secure the prohibition and elimination of the worst forms of child labour, including recruitment and use of child soldiers, and by 2025 end child labour in all its forms

The EU actively participated in the IV Global Conference on the Sustained Eradication of Child Labour held in Buenos Aires from 14 to 16 November 2017. The EU hosted a side-event to highlight actions and projects to support the fight against child labour in supply chains, in particular through the implementation of projects in the garment, conflict minerals and fisheries sectors. The EU also participated in the negotiations of the outcome document (the Buenos Aires Declaration), and presented pledges in the closing session. The EU is committing to continue to work through multi-dimensional and multi-stakeholder approaches to protect children from child labour through access to quality education, legal and social protection, improving family livelihoods and better jobs for youth.

In line with the commitment to end harmful practices, the EU is supporting two UNICEF and UNFPA global programmes; one addressing child, early and forced marriage and the other on female genital mutilation. In October, the EU supported and participated in a high-level event on ending child marriage in Dakar, Senegal, focusing on the causes and impact of child marriage on the realisation of girls' potential and on the wider development in West and Central Africa. The region is home to six of the ten countries with the highest child marriage prevalence levels in the world, all of which have a prevalence of over 50 %.

The EU, together with the Group of Latin American and Caribbean Countries (GRULAC), tabled its annual resolutions on the rights of the child during this year's session of the UN Human Rights Council, on the protection of the rights of the child in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and during the UN General Assembly Third Committee, on violence against children.

Older Persons

Older persons make up a continuously growing part of the EU population and their contributions to society are of increasing importance. However, the EU is also conscious of the difficulties and challenges facing older persons, and of the need to do more to ensure that their human rights are fully respected. The EU took an active part in the 8th session of the Open-Ended Working Group on Ageing held in New York in July 2017 contributing actively to the discussions on equality and non-discrimination and neglect, violence and abuse. The EU also shared relevant, publicly available factual information, including from the European Institute for Gender Equality and EU Agency for Fundamental Rights, and contributed to the exchange of data and best practices. The EU also contributed to the report for the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) which was submitted to the fourth Ministerial Conference on Ageing on 21 - 22 September 2017 in Lisbon, Portugal. At the ministerial conference, European ministers issued a declaration, reconfirming their commitment to carry out the Regional Implementation Strategy (RIS) of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing (MIPAA) and to safeguard older persons' enjoyment of human rights as laid down in MIPAA and RIS and other relevant United Nations, international and regional conventions and treaties.

Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Intersex (LGBTI) Persons

During 2017 the EU continued its efforts to effectively promote and protect the human rights of all people, including LGBTI persons, in line with its Guidelines to Promote and Protect the Enjoyment of All Human Rights by LGBTI Persons. It focused on the following four priority areas of action: decriminalisation and combating discriminatory laws and policies; promoting equality and non-discrimination; combating LGBTI-phobic violence; and supporting and protecting human rights defenders.

On 16 May 2017, the HR/VP Mogherini issued a statement to mark the International Day against Homophobia, Transphobia and Biphobia on the 17 May, taking the opportunity to remind governments of their obligation to promote the universality of human rights and ensure that everyone, regardless of their gender identity or sexual orientation enjoys these rights without discrimination. Several EU Delegations around the world commemorated the day by flying the rainbow flag, issuing press releases or organising events to raise awareness about the human rights of LGBTI persons, while many others supported local pride celebrations and engaged with civil society to end discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity (SOGI).

EU celebrates Tokyo Rainbow Pride

On 7 May 2017, ahead of the International Day against Homophobia, Transphobia and Biphobia on 17 May, the EU delegation to Japan together with Member States' Embassies participated in the 5th edition of Tokyo Rainbow Pride under the common slogan "Together for Equality and Diversity". Materials related to EU policy on sexual orientation and gender identity issues and broader human rights issues were promoted. The event attracted nearly 100,000 visitors. Other EU Member States were also present in separate booths. For the first time, European ambassadors, including the EU delegation's deputy head of mission, took part in the parade under a common banner.

The EU also raised the human rights of LGTBI persons in its dialogues with third countries and issued public statements on the persecution of LGBTI individuals in Chechnya.

The EU continued to be actively engaged in multilateral efforts to tackle violence and discrimination against LGBTI persons. During the public consultation in Geneva on 24 January 2017 by the UN Independent Expert on protection against violence and discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity, Mr. Vitit Muntarbhorn, the EU recalled that this resolution is an important step in line with the pledge made by the international community in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development that no one will be left behind. On 1 January 2018 Mr. Victor Madrigal-Borloz (Costa Rica) assumed the role of UN Independent Expert on protection against violence and discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity for a three year period.

In June 2017, the EU Delegation to the United Nations in New York organised a panel discussion on intersex issues with the participation of Hanne Gaby Odiele, internationally acclaimed Belgian fashion model who advocates for the end of 'normalising' medical interventions, stigmatisation and discrimination. The same event marked the inclusion of intersex issues within the mandate of the United Nations Core Group for LGBT issues, of which the EU Delegation is a member, from then on called "LGBTI" Group.

LGBTI persecution in Chechnya

The overall human rights situation in Russia in 2017 continued to be marked by the shrinking space for independent civil society and the systematic infringement of basic freedoms. Among the gravest human rights violations in the country in 2017 was the persecution of LGBTI people in Chechnya, and there were also serious allegations of extrajudicial killings. The EU reaction to these events was clear and swift. The HR/VP Mogherini and the EU repeatedly expressed their concern. On 6 April 2017 her spokesperson issued a statement calling for "prompt, effective and thorough investigations into the reports of abductions and killings of gay men in Chechnya". The HR/VP raised this issue with Russian Foreign Minister Lavrov during their meeting on 24 April in Moscow, as well as on 11 July in Brussels. The EU urged the Russian authorities to stop the violence and investigate the events in the Permanent Council of the OSCE and in the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe. Furthermore, EU officials liaised with local human rights defenders, international human rights organisations and the journalists who uncovered the persecution in order to be fully informed on the situation on the ground and to offer support to the victims. EU Missions in Moscow discussed the issue and coordinated their action. Some Member States granted visas to the victims of the persecution. The international attention brought to this persecution forced the Russian federal authorities to exert pressure on the Chechen leadership to stop the persecution against the LGBTI community.

Persons with Disabilities

In 2017, the number of countries that have ratified the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) reached 170. Throughout the year, the EU continued its efforts to promote the implementation of the CRPD. During the annual conference of parties to the CRPD in June, the EU presented policies on accessibility including the proposal for a European Accessibility Act and shared information about the work done by the EU in humanitarian action to protect persons with disabilities from multiple-discrimination. The EU also organised several side events with civil society organisations, including disabled people's organisations on accessibility, social services and disability indicators.

In line with Council conclusions on the World Humanitarian Summit of 12 May 2016,²⁵ the EU in 2017 also signed up to the Charter on Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities in Humanitarian Action. The Charter affirms a collective will to place persons with disabilities at the centre of humanitarian responses.

On the occasion of the International Day of Persons with Disabilities in November, the EU organised a large conference addressing citizenship, political participation and urban inclusiveness.

The EU also participated in events organised by other partners, such as a high level Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM) in September 2017 where the human rights of persons with disabilities and the implementation of the CRPD were central to the discussions.

In 2017, the EU, via its operating grants, supported 8 NGOs which represent persons with disabilities at EU level and that contribute to EU policy making on the rights of persons with disabilities.

²⁵ Conclusions of the Council and the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States meeting within the Council on the World Humanitarian Summit, 8850/16, 12 May 2016

For the first time ever, the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR) launched a global call for proposals containing a specific lot dedicated to the promotion and the support to the rights of persons with disabilities worth EUR 5 million in 2017. The objective is to support civil society in its actions to promote the full and equal enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms by all persons with disabilities, and to promote respect for their inherent dignity. This call supports twofold actions that promote and support the ratification, effective implementation and monitoring of the (CRPD) and its Optional Protocol; and foster partnerships between human rights civil society organisations and disabled peoples' organisations (DPOs) and/or civil society organisations working for persons with disabilities, in order to integrate disability within their wider human rights work.

Rights of Indigenous Peoples

At the UN, the EU actively contributed to the consultations on possible measures for the participation of indigenous peoples' representative and institutions in meetings of relevant UN bodies and supported a General Assembly resolution on this matter. The EU took an active part in the UN high-level event of the UN General Assembly to mark the 10th anniversary of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples in April 2017.

On 15 May 2017 the EU, for the first time in 15 years, adopted Council conclusions²⁶ specifically on indigenous peoples as follow-up to the EU Action Plan on Democracy and Human Rights 2015-2019. The Council conclusions on indigenous peoples give priority to addressing discrimination based on indigenous origin or identity as well as threats and violence, in the context of land and natural resources and in the protection of the environment, biodiversity and the climate.

²⁶ Council conclusions on Indigenous Peoples, 8814/17, 15 May 2017

The Council conclusions further identify the EU's rights-based approach to development, encompassing all human rights, as the main vehicle for integrating support for indigenous peoples into the EU's implementation of the 2030 Agenda. Specific attention is given to those in the most vulnerable situations, including in forced displacement or in violent/armed conflict. Reference is also made to indigenous peoples' contributions to conflict prevention and peacebuilding. Finally, the Council conclusions speak of the need to further enhance opportunities for dialogue and consultation with indigenous peoples at all levels of EU cooperation, including in the context of the new European Consensus on Development and of the renewed partnership with African, Caribbean and Pacific countries.

In bilateral cooperation, issues of relevance to indigenous peoples were addressed in the human rights dialogues with partner countries. The EU's increased attention to indigenous peoples allowed for a lab debate on inequalities and indigenous peoples during the European Development Days, organised by the ILO and the Danish Institute for Human Rights.

Despite the many gains made in the protection of indigenous peoples' rights in many countries, 2017 was again a year marked by reports of violations against indigenous leaders, in many cases linked to their work in defence of forests or other protected natural resources.

Rights of Persons Belonging to Minorities

The world witnessed a number of tragic events throughout 2017 with violence, mass-killings and forced displacement of minority groups in several countries. The root causes of many such events reside with decades of repression and violation of the rights of persons belonging to minorities. All of which underlines the importance of continuous international access to and scrutiny of the situations of persons belonging to minorities. The EU, both bilaterally and through the UN in particular, undertook high level diplomatic efforts to address the gravest and most urgent situations while also offering financial and humanitarian support.

In its human rights dialogues with partner countries and regional organisations the EU continued to address the need to respect the human rights of persons belonging to minorities. Many of these dialogues take the form of exchange of best practices, where the EU presents its own legal frameworks and activities in promoting the rights of persons belonging to minorities within Europe.

These dialogues also covered issues on the multiple-discrimination that affects women, LGBTI – persons and persons with disabilities of minority groups. The EU further increased its attention to persons affected by caste-based discrimination. However the taboos associated with caste-based discrimination continue to hamper the opportunities for frank discussion with some countries where the notion of caste persists. This underscores the role of the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR) in supporting discriminated groups to voice their concerns and to promote intercommunal tolerance and understanding.

The EU has continued to support the work of international mandate holders on minority issues, such as the Special Representative on Roma Issues of the Secretary General of the Council of Europe, the UN Special Rapporteur on Minority Issues, and the OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities. The EU's advocacy for unhindered access for international mandate holders to geographical areas of high tension has proven to be increasingly relevant.

The 10th session of the UN Forum on Minority Issues took place in November 2017 was dedicated to minority youth: towards diverse and inclusive societies.

The EU contributed significantly by emphasising the role of minority youth in promoting peace and stability. Young people are also important for intercultural dialogue as a particularly important tool in the prevention of conflict and the promotion of reconciliation and mutual understanding in post-conflict societies.

Myanmar/Burma: Human rights and the Rohingya crisis

Myanmar/Burma's democratic transition during the first full year under the democratically elected civilian government was undermined by the crisis in Rakhine State, where the human rights situation remains extremely serious.

Council Conclusions of 16 October 2017 on Myanmar (13099/17) condemned the ongoing widespread, systematic grave human rights violations and abuses by the Myanmar military and security forces that have taken place in Rakhine State since 25 August 2017, driving nearly 700,000 Rohingya to flee to Bangladesh. The EU has been extremely active when it comes to stating the expectation that there needs to be accountability and that Myanmar must allow full humanitarian access and an independent credible investigation into these allegations including by the UN Human Rights Council Fact Finding Mission.

The EU is a key provider of humanitarian assistance for Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh. The EU has also raised the issue in multilateral fora, leading the Human Rights Council Resolution on the situation of human rights in Myanmar of 24 March 2017, as well as in subsequent EU supported resolutions at the UNGA Third Committee and at the Special session of the UN Human Rights Council. On 23 October 2017, the EU and Kuwait co-hosted a "Pledging Conference for the Rohingya Refugee Crisis" organized by OCHA, UNHCR and IOM in Geneva.

On the initiative of HR/VP Mogherini, State Counsellor Aung San Suu Kyi held a diplomatic briefing on the situation in Rakhine State for Asian and European foreign ministers at the 13th ASEM Foreign Ministers meeting in Nay Pyi Taw on 20 November 2017.

Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance

Throughout 2017, the EU has engaged continuously with partner countries, in multilateral fora and with civil society on the fight against racism, racial discrimination, and xenophobia and related intolerance. In its human rights dialogues, the EU emphasises the importance of the universal ratification and implementation of the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (ICERD).

In its participation in the UN General Assembly's Third Committee, the Human Rights Council and the mechanisms specifically dedicated to the elimination of racial discrimination, the EU promotes a consensual approach, focusing on the obligations of states under the ICERD. In December 2017, the EU High Level Group on combating racism, xenophobia and other forms of intolerance held for the first time a discussion on people of African descent. The conclusions of this meeting will be important for the EU's future contributions in the context of the International Decade for People of African Descent.

11. Economic, Social and Cultural Rights

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. ESCR are core human rights, and include work-related rights; the right to social security and protection; protection and assistance to the family; the right to an adequate standard of living including food, housing, water and sanitation as well as clothing; the right to education; and the right to health and cultural rights.

In 2017, the EU continued to promote the signature, ratification and the effective implementation of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. It also actively promoted the ratification and the effective implementation of the fundamental conventions of the International Labour Organisation and the core labour standards under the 1998 ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work in particular through its trade, cooperation, social and external policies. The Generalised Scheme of Preferences (GSP+) on market access for traded goods into the EU also encourages beneficiary countries to put key UN human rights and International Labour Organisation conventions encompassing ESCR into practice.

Under the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR), the EU contributes to the monitoring and effective implementation of the specific international core conventions ratified by GSP+ beneficiary countries. The EU supports and empowers civil society actors to contribute to the monitoring and effective implementation of the relevant human rights and ILO conventions ratified by GSP+ beneficiary countries, namely: Guatemala, Armenia, Bolivia, Ecuador, Georgia, Peru, Cape Verde, Mongolia, Pakistan, Paraguay and Kyrgyzstan.

The EU is also supporting a project together with the International Labour Organisation, aimed at improving compliance with the eight fundamental ILO conventions in the countries of the project, with a view to reducing and progressively eliminating discrimination, forced labour, child labour, and violations of freedom of association. This programme has activities in Cape Verde, Mongolia, Pakistan, Thailand, Panama, and Paraguay.

A great variety of EIDHR projects are supported to advance economic, social and cultural rights worldwide. In line with the Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy, the European Instrument for Democracy and Human rights launches an annual global call for proposals with around EUR 5 million dedicated to support economic social and cultural rights; and for 2017 one area of focus was combating modern forms of forced labour and slavery.

During 2017, the EU paid increased attention to economic, social and cultural rights in human rights dialogues with third countries such as Cuba and Thailand. At the multilateral level, the EU supported and cooperated with several UN Special Rapporteurs working on ESCR, including the UN Special Rapporteurs on adequate housing, health, the right to education and water/sanitation. The EU also actively participated in the International Labour Conference and the Governing Body of the International Labour Office. Furthermore, the EU funded capacity-building activities to support partner governments and social partners in implementing international labour standards, including in a trade context.

The constant efforts to contribute to work related rights, social policies, education, access to food, water and sanitation, health and standard of living are closely linked with EU's and the Member States' commitment to the realisation of the UN Sustainable Development Goals. The new European Consensus also confirmed the aim set out in Objective 17 of the Action Plan for Human Rights and Democracy (2015-2019) to mainstream ESCR by taking a rights-based approach to all development instruments and activities.

Using this rights-based approach, the EU provided substantial funding in support of labour rights, social policies, the right to health, education, access to food, water and sanitation and a standard of living using both geographical instruments, such as the European Development Fund, the Development Cooperation Instrument and the European Neighbourhood & Partnership Instrument, and thematic programmes, such as the Food Security Thematic Programme. For example, the EU cooperated with the ILO to promote labour rights in Myanmar and to establish an Economic and Social Affairs Platform in the Western Balkans.

In 2017, EU development aid also supported a wide range of activities, promoting culture and traditional heritage. The EU's objectives in this area are to encourage cultural diversity, stimulate intercultural dialogue, facilitate people's access to culture, and widen the scope to place legal cultural artefacts on markets abroad.

12. Business and Human Rights

In light of continued reports of violations of civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights resulting from corporate behaviour, in 2017 the EU continued to support the activities of human rights defenders and promoted respect for human rights by businesses, and access to a remedy when abuses occur. It called on all business enterprises, both transnational and domestic, to implement and comply with the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights (UNGPs), and raised the issue during human rights dialogues with a number of third countries, particularly in Latin America and Asia, and with regional organisations, such as ASEAN and the African Union.

The EU continued to promote the UNGPs, endorsed unanimously in 2011 at UN level²⁷, as the first globally agreed standard for preventing and addressing the risk of adverse impacts on human rights, linked to business activities. By the end of 2017, 14 EU Member States had adopted National Action Plans on Business and Human Rights, and others had advanced significantly with National Action Plans on Corporate Social Responsibility or on Business and Human Rights.

In 2017, EU Member States had to complete the transposition of EU law²⁸ laying down the rules whereby companies with more than 500 employees are required to disclose non-financial information in their management reports as from 2018. Information requested includes social aspects, respect for human rights, anti-corruption and bribery issues. In June 2017 the European Commission published guidelines to help companies in disclosing this information.²⁹ In 2017, EU also adopted legislation requiring EU companies to ensure that conflict minerals are only imported from responsible sources.³⁰ Furthermore, 2017 was the first full year of the application of revised EU legislation on public procurement, which contains a cross-cutting social clause based on respect of applicable environmental, social or labour law obligations, including international law, at the place where the work is carried out or the service is provided.

²⁷ Human rights and transnational corporations and other business enterprises, A/HRC/RES/17/4

²⁸ Directive 2014/95/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 22 October 2014 amending Directive 2013/34/EU as regards disclosure of non-financial and diversity information by certain large undertakings and groups

²⁹ Communication from the Commission, Guidelines on non-financial reporting (methodology for reporting non-financial information), (2017/C 215/01)

³⁰ [Regulation \(EU\) 2017/821 of the European Parliament and of the Council, 17 May 2017](#), laying down supply chain due diligence obligations for Union importers of tin, tantalum and tungsten, their ores, and gold originating from conflict-affected and high-risk areas

Concerning access to redress mechanisms, the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA), responding to the Council's request, published an opinion in April 2017 on 'Improving access to remedy in the area of business and human rights at the EU level'.³¹ FRA has been tasked to work on the follow-up of this study, collecting, as proposed by the Commission in August 2017, "information on judicial and non-judicial mechanisms in the Member States concerning access to remedy for victims of business related violations". The European Commission is in the process of assessing the implementation of the 2013 EU Recommendation on collective redress. On the basis of the assessment, the need for further action at EU level and the form of such possible action will be further considered.

The EU Regulation on Conflict Minerals³² was adopted by the European Parliament and the Council, and entered into force in June 2017. As set out in the Regulation, the European Commission has been drafting a handbook for economic operators explaining how best to apply the criteria for the identification of conflict-affected and high-risk areas.

In its communication 'Making Public Procurement Work in and for Europe'³³ the Commission highlighted the importance of strategic public procurement (a term indicating the use of sustainability and innovation criteria in public tenders) for central and local governments to respond to societal and environmental issues. The commission also recalls the effort of some Member States to make the use of sustainable quality criteria mandatory in public procurement procedures. Furthermore, it stated that strategic criteria need to be applied systematically and that public authorities across Europe can support the uptake of such criteria by providing practical support to contracting authorities (disseminating methodologies for benchmarks, regularly updating labels and standard criteria) and by making available a library of good practices.

³¹ [Improving access to remedy in the area of business and human rights at the EU level, 2017](#)

³² Regulation (EU) 2017/821 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 17 May 2017, laying down supply chain due diligence obligations for Union importers of tin, tantalum and tungsten, their ores, and gold originating from conflict-affected and high-risk areas

³³ Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions, Making Public Procurement work in and for Europe, COM(2017) 572 final, 3 October 2017

The Commission worked towards a higher uptake of sustainability criteria by producing and updating general guidance on both green and socially responsible public procurement, continuing to produce and update green public procurement criteria and organising awareness raising events at high EU level, such as the June 2017 joint conference with the OECD on strategic public procurement, and collecting and disseminating good practices.

As announced in the Commission Communication of November 2016 'Next Steps for a Sustainable European Future'³⁴, in 2017 the Commission set up a multi-stakeholder platform providing a forum to exchange experience and best practice on the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals across sectors and at local, regional, national and Union level, where stakeholders can engage in debates about sustainable development and provide information about related successful initiatives, mobilising expertise from key sectors.

As regards technical support, in 2017, technical support to develop National Action Plans was provided under the Partnership Instrument (PI) to countries in Latin America such as Brazil, Costa Rica, Mexico, Panama and Peru. Two actions have been planned, and are starting in the first quarter of 2018, for the Partnership Instrument support, namely 'Responsible Business Conduct (RBC) in Latin America' and 'Responsible Supply Chains in Asia', developed by the EU together with the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and the International Labour Organisation.

³⁴ Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions, Next steps for a sustainable European future European action for sustainability, COM(2016) 739, 22 November 2016

The European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights supported several ongoing projects on Business and Human Rights within the annual global call for proposals with around EUR 5 million devoted to this topic, including support for the implementation of the UNGPs: six projects were awarded and then transferred to delegations. The general objective was to ensure human rights due diligence in global value chains through the promotion and implementation of the UNGPs by supporting actions which enhance capacities, knowledge and monitoring, including with regard to Corporate Social Responsibility in respect of human rights and advocacy for the drafting and implementation of National Action Plans (NAPs) by partner countries.

Within the multilateral framework, the EU engaged constructively at the third session of the Intergovernmental Working Group for the preparation of an international, legally binding instrument on Business and Human Rights in October 2017. The EU made the point that the discussions should not be limited only to transnational corporations, as is currently the case, as many abuses are committed by enterprises at the domestic level. The EU was an active participant in the sixth UN Forum on Business and Human Rights, chaired by the UN Working Group, focusing on 'Access to Effective Remedy' in November 2017. The EU and its Member States were also very active at the International Labour Organisation with regards to the promotion of decent work in global supply chains and of the Tripartite Declaration of Principles concerning multinational enterprises (MNE) and social policy (the MNE Declaration, revised in March 2017), which provides guidance on due diligence processes consistent with the UN Guiding Principles on how enterprises can contribute through their operations worldwide to the realisation of decent work, including the promotion of fundamental principles and rights at work.

13. The EU Human Rights Approach to Conflicts and Crises

Integrating human rights in conflict prevention, crisis management and transitional justice

The occurrence and emergence of conflicts and crises has continued over the past year. Serious violations of international humanitarian and human rights law follow in the wake of conflict and are affecting the lives of millions of civilians around the world. It is a core commitment of the EU to promote the application and protection of human rights in conflicts and crises.

The EU has worked to ensure greater coherence in the fields of human rights reporting, early warning and conflict analysis. To move from early warning to preventive action, the EU has been strengthening the use of its Conflict Early Warning System (EWS) in order to identify long-term risks for violent conflict, which may lead to human rights violations and vice versa. Work on the prevention of atrocity crimes has received continued support in line with the EU commitment to the principle of the Responsibility to Protect, having, inter alia, reinforced the cooperation and coordination with the UN Secretary General's Special Advisers on the Prevention of Genocide and on the Responsibility to Protect, and embedded the Responsibility to Protect in the new European Consensus on Development.

In line with the Global Strategy, the EU has continued to mainstream human rights in all phases of Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP), throughout the year. Following the conclusion of the Baseline Study on the Integration of Human Rights and Gender into CSDP in 2016,³⁵ and its political endorsement in 2017, work has progressed to implement and deliver along the baselines identified. Efforts to develop further operational guidance for the implementation of human rights and gender standards in CSDP have continued. The EU has made efforts to raise awareness. Several training sessions have been organised for human rights and gender advisors and focal points in CSDP missions and operations and the mandatory pre-deployment training for CSDP mission and operation staff contains obligatory human rights and international humanitarian law (IHL) components. These efforts were further strengthened in 2017 by the adoption of the new EU policy on training for CSDP,³⁶ which establishes mandatory and standardised pre-deployment training for all staff. The new training policy underlines that all CSDP training should reflect the EU's basic principles of human rights and gender equality, International Humanitarian Law and Refugee Law, and UN resolutions including UNSCR 1325 and the subsequent resolutions on women, peace and security.

³⁵ Working document of the European External Action Service, Report on the Baseline Study on Integrating Human Rights and Gender into the European Union's Common Security and Defence Policy, EEAS(2016) 990, 10 November 2016.

³⁶ EU Policy on Training for CSDP, 7838/17, 3 April 2017

The EU aims to uphold the highest standards of professionalism and conduct in its CSDP missions and operations, thus the adoption of the new Code of Conduct and Discipline in 2016 for EU civilian crisis management missions has been followed in 2017 by an upgrade of the Generic Standards of Behaviour, applicable to staff in all CSDP missions and operations.

During 2017 the EU continued its efforts to support transitional justice processes around the world and to implement its Policy Framework on Support to Transitional Justice, adopted in 2015.

Transitional justice has continuously featured as a topic in human rights dialogues with partner countries, in reporting on the implementation of Human Rights and Democracy Country Strategies (HRDCS), in training and awareness raising and in EU financial support to international and state actors as well as civil society throughout the year.

EU promoting human rights in Syria

In 2017, the EU continued to work to support Syrian human rights defenders and to help ensure accountability for war crimes, human rights violations and abuses and violations of international humanitarian law, including the confirmed use of chemical weapons. The EU deplored in the strongest terms the systematic violations perpetrated in Syria, as documented by the UN established Independent International Commission of Inquiry.

The EU continued to support the gathering of information in view of future legal actions, including at the International Criminal Court, against all those responsible for breaches of international law. In this context, the EU supported the establishment of the international, impartial and independent mechanism established for this purpose by the UN General Assembly and stresses the importance of providing sufficient resources for it to continue its vital work. The EU supports all efforts for national reconciliation and will continue to call for transitional justice.

International Criminal Court

The EU continued its efforts to ensure that perpetrators of genocide, war crimes and crimes against humanity are held accountable for their actions, and to achieve justice for victims of atrocities. In that context, the EU continued to support the International Criminal Court (ICC)³⁷, not least by providing political support to the Court in multilateral fora such as the UN Security Council and the UN Human Rights Council. The EU has provided financial assistance to the Court and to civil society actors who support the work of the Court.

One example of such support has been the EU's ongoing commitment to promoting the universality of the Rome Statute, in particular in view of the 20th anniversary in 2018 of its adoption. The EU has continued to make every effort to further this process with third countries, in particular during its human rights dialogues, through *démarche* campaigns worldwide, the systematic inclusion of a clause in agreements with third countries, encouraging the ratification of, or accession to, the ICC Statute, offering of implementation assistance, or through financial support to civil society organisations advocating the universality of the Rome Statute.

In particular, regional or local seminars and training for legal professionals have proved extremely relevant, covering the defence or representation of victims, while also promoting dialogue among participants at the regional level. Moreover, training for legal professionals increased participants' legal expertise in international criminal and humanitarian law and developed their knowledge of the Rome Statute system.

³⁷ In accordance with Council Decision 2011/168/CFSP of 21 March 2011 and the 2011 Action Plan on its implementation.

The EU and its Member States increased their efforts to strengthen cooperation with the Court. In particular, the EU undertook consistent action to encourage the full cooperation of states with the ICC, including the prompt execution of arrest warrants. The EU's reaction to non-cooperation with the International Criminal Court by third states focused especially on the response to persisting cases of non-cooperation. The EU's reaction to the visit of Sudanese President Al-Bashir to Uganda, Russia and Chad in November and December 2017 is a case in point.³⁸

International Humanitarian Law

The EU and its Member States remained engaged in the promotion of respect for international humanitarian law as part of its wider commitment to advancing respect for human dignity and for the principles of international law.

The EU continued to be active in promoting respect for International Humanitarian Law across the various areas covered in the EU Guidelines on promoting compliance with International Humanitarian Law.

In Syria, for example, the EU Delegation has continuously raising IHL issues in its bilateral meetings with representatives of the Syrian authorities in Damascus. The EU Member States have also contributed to joint diplomatic efforts to raise awareness of IHL issues at a high level, such as in the UN Universal Periodic Review (UPR) for Syria.

Humanitarian workers can pay a high price for disrespect of IHL with an average of 6 workers kidnapped, 7 killed and 8 wounded per month. The EU continues to facilitate the negotiations work towards a better implementation of the UNGA Resolution on the Safety and security of humanitarian personnel and protection of United Nations personnel.

³⁸ Declaration by the High Representative Federica Mogherini on behalf of the European Union on President Al-Bashir's visit to Uganda, 16 November 2017

Faced with an increasing number of armed conflicts with dire humanitarian consequences, during the year the EU continued to use its extensive network of dialogues and contacts with third states and other international actors to promote respect for IHL and adherence to international legal instruments. Where necessary its representatives delivered démarches in relation to particular situations or issued statements relating to IHL - including in relation to particular humanitarian crises, or the delivery of humanitarian aid. The EU also remained a strong supporter of the intergovernmental process, co-facilitated by Switzerland and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), to establish a regular, voluntary discussion between states, aiming to reach consensus on concrete ways to strengthen respect for IHL by the next ICRC International Conference in 2019.

In 2017, the EU allocated an unprecedented amount of EUR 246 million in humanitarian aid supporting humanitarian protection actions worldwide. The EU has also provided dedicated funding for IHL dissemination, for example through a number of activities in Afghanistan and Ukraine, aimed at increasing the knowledge and capacity of duty-bearers (authorities, arms carriers, etc.) in relation to respect for IHL and IHRL in times of armed conflict. In relation to the illegally annexed Crimea and Sevastopol, the EU called for full implementation of the UNGA Resolution 72/190 of 19 December 2017, including the Russian Federation's obligations under applicable international humanitarian law. The EU furthermore expanded its financial and technical support to the Ukrainian civil society and human rights defenders in their work on political, civil, economic, social and cultural rights and democratisation, including human rights in conflict-affected areas in eastern Ukraine and in the Crimean peninsula. The HR/VP, her spokesperson and EU Delegation in Kyiv also issued several statements condemning human rights violations in the illegally annexed Crimean peninsula.

Counter-terrorism

In 2017, the EU reiterated its strong and unequivocal condemnation of terrorism in all its forms and manifestations, as terrorism constitutes one of the most serious global threats to international peace, security and human rights.

In line with the European Union Counter-Terrorism Strategy³⁹, the European Union's strategic commitment is to combat terrorism globally while respecting human rights. The commitment to human rights in counter-terrorism was also reiterated in the 2017 G20 Action Plan on Countering Terrorism⁴⁰ which states that the G20 members "reaffirm that all measures on countering terrorism need to be implemented in accordance with the UN Charter and all obligations under international law, including international human rights law".

In June 2017, the Foreign Affairs Council also renewed the strategic direction in this field by adopting comprehensive conclusions on EU External Action on Counter-Terrorism⁴¹. The Council stressed the importance of a criminal justice approach to the fight against terrorism and support to partner countries to strengthen their criminal justice response in compliance with international law, including international human rights law.

A number of measures will be employed to ensure the implementation of the Council conclusions, including:

- Strengthening the network of counter-terrorism experts in EU Delegations;
- Enhancing cooperation between Common Security and Defence Policy missions and operations and EU Justice and Home Affairs agencies;
- Stepping up international cooperation with partner countries, key strategic partners and key regional and multilateral partners.

³⁹ Council of the European Union, 30 November 2005: The European Union Counter-Terrorism Strategy

⁴⁰ G20 Action Plan on Countering Terrorism, 2017

⁴¹ Council conclusions on EU External Action on Counter-terrorism, 2017

In line with the Global Strategy for the European Union's Foreign and Security Policy,⁴² the EU has strengthened cooperation with priority partners in the Middle East, North Africa, the Western Balkans and Turkey, Sahel and Horn of Africa, e.g. by targeted political dialogues and the development of counter –terrorism partnerships in key-thematic areas. The EU has also increased the outreach to the Arab world including through the Gulf Cooperation Council and the Arab League.

Human rights issues have been addressed in counter-terrorism dialogues with multiple parties – including India, Turkey, Pakistan, Egypt and Tunisia– and third countries have been called upon to integrate human rights considerations into counter-terrorism action/policies as well as move from a confession-based to an evidence-based criminal justice system. While engaging with these countries, we also stress the importance of prevention as the key pillar of any whole of government counter terrorism strategy, and recommend that they draft a Prevention of Violent Extremism Action Plan in line with the call mad by the UN, and allow civil society to play and important role.

The EU also recently published new Operational Guidelines on the preparation and implementation of EU-financed actions specific to countering terrorism and violent extremism in third countries⁴³, following the methodology of the previously adopted companion document, Operational Human Rights Guidance for EU External Cooperation Actions Addressing Terrorism, Organised Crime and Cybersecurity: Integrating the Rights-Based Approach (RBA)⁴⁴.

These Operational Guidelines are intended to provide a comprehensive practical framework on the EU's external actions in the area of counter-terrorism and preventing and countering violent extremism, and make explicit reference to human rights aspects in the process.

⁴² From Shared Vision to Common Action: Implementing the EU Global Strategy - Year 1 - A Global Strategy for the European Union's Foreign and Security Policy

⁴³ [Operational Guidelines on the preparation and implementation of EU financed actions specific to countering terrorism and violent extremism in third countries, 2017](#)

⁴⁴ [Operational Human Rights Guidance for EU external cooperation actions addressing Terrorism, Organised Crime and Cybersecurity: Integrating the Rights-Based Approach \(RBA\), 2017](#)

Finally, the EU together with the Member States developed a practical toolkit and policy recommendations on the contribution of youth work to preventing marginalisation and violent radicalisation. ⁴⁵

14. Human Rights Throughout EU External Policies

Mobility, Migrants, Refugees and Asylum Seekers

Protecting the human rights of migrants and refugees and improving their situation inside and outside the EU was at the heart of the European approach to addressing migratory issues throughout 2017. 2017 has indeed been a year where EU work has yielded clear results, bringing it closer towards a comprehensive and holistic migratory system, building on partnership, sustainability and full respect of human rights.

The EU has progressively deepened the external dimension of its migration policy, complementing and reinforcing its internal dimension. Along the migratory routes, the EU continued to fight criminal networks involved in migrant smuggling, as well as in trafficking in human beings, and conducted search and rescue operations at sea, with the support of the European Border and Coast Guard Agency and European Union Naval Force (EUNAVFOR) MED Operation Sophia, the latter having saved more than 42 000 lives since its inception. At the same time, in the framework of the European Boarder and Coast Guard Agency (Poseidon Operation), more than 18 000 people were rescued in the Eastern Aegean Sea.

⁴⁵ [The contribution of youth work to preventing marginalisation and violent radicalisation \(2017\)](#)

The training of the Libyan Coastguard and Navy conducted by Operation Sophia and delivered jointly with UNHCR and IOM, continued in 2017, and included an important human rights/refugee law component, with a strong focus on respect of human rights norms, principles, and standards, as well as on persons and groups in vulnerable situations and the necessity to ensure a higher level of protection to them. A monitoring mechanism was set up to monitor the long-term efficiency of the training, focused on understanding the Libyan Navy and Coastguard's ability to perform their mission and to monitor their behaviour. Respect of human rights was of paramount importance. In 2017 alone, the Libyan Coast Guard has saved 20 000 lives. The European Border and Coast Guard Agency also conducted operations at the EU external land borders, with a view to address migration and to secure the EU's external borders.

Progress continued in offering, as appropriate, legal and safe pathways to international protection in the EU for those who need it. Since the summer of 2015, around 26 000 persons have been resettled under the voluntary EU resettlement schemes. Collective and voluntary EU resettlement efforts were given a further boost in September 2017 with the Commission's recommendation to Member States to resettle at least 50 000 people by the end of October 2019, for which EUR 500 million has been set aside. By the end of 2017 this call resulted in over 39 800 new resettlement places being offered by 19 EU Member States.

The EU Facility for Refugees in Turkey offers protection and supports basic needs through its Emergency Social Safety Net (ESSN) to 1.2 million refugees. It also supports the access to education of 500 000 Syrian refugee children.

In Libya, the EU supported - jointly with our partners - concrete actions to ensure the respect of human rights, improve migrants' living conditions on Libyan territory and help migrants and refugees subject to criminal networks, delivering on all aspects of the strategy set out in the Malta Declaration⁴⁶ and the Action Plan on the Central Mediterranean⁴⁷.

⁴⁶ Malta Declaration by the members of the European Council on the external aspects of migration: addressing the Central Mediterranean route, 3 February 2017

⁴⁷ Action plan on measures to support Italy, reduce pressure along the Central Mediterranean route and increase solidarity, SEC(2017) 339, 4 July 2017

A programme worth EUR 90 million from the EU Trust Fund for Africa was adopted in April 2017 to ensure 1) protection and assistance for all those in need in Libya, with a particular focus on migrants and refugees, implemented by the IOM, UNHCR and UNICEF; 2) stabilisation, aiming at supporting socio-economic development at municipal level and local governance, in order to better integrate migrants, internally displaced persons and returnees and stabilise host communities, also ensuring that at least 50 000 children have access to education supplies, implemented by UNDP, GIZ, IOM and UNICEF. In addition, in July 2017, a programme worth €46 million was adopted to reinforce the integrated migration and border management capacities of the Libyan authorities, as part of EU's comprehensive approach: increased border management goes hand in hand with the work the EU is doing on the sustainable socioeconomic development of local communities, as well as protection, assisted voluntary returns and reintegration of migrants.

Stranded migrants have received assistance and protection inside or outside detention centres through the IOM, UNHCR, UNICEF and a number of NGOs, with particular attention paid to those in the most vulnerable situations (victims of trafficking and gender-based violence, children, women). Thanks to this support, more than 20 000 migrants have been assisted through the provision of non-food items and hygiene kits while more than 6 000 have received medical assistance. Meanwhile, the EU and its partners promote alternatives to detention, by playing an advocacy role with Libyan counterparts and negotiating for the release of the most vulnerable. Safe spaces are being established in Libya with EU support to shelter migrants and address their specific needs. Working together with the IOM and UNHCR, the EU continued to provide, as appropriate, safe pathways out of Libya.

In the margins of the EU-AU summit in November 2017, the EU set up a joint task force together with the African Union and the United Nations, to save and protect lives of migrants and refugees along the routes and in particular inside Libya, accelerating the assisted voluntary returns to countries of origin, resettling of those in need of international protection and stepping up the fight against migrant smugglers and criminal networks involved in trafficking in human beings.

In 2017, together with the IOM and with a significant contribution from the EU Trust Fund for Africa, over 19 300 people were assisted to voluntarily return to their countries of origin, where they were offered reintegration programmes. The EU supported UNHCR in its efforts to evacuate people from Libya in need of international protection. The EU also supported search and rescue operations in the desert in Niger helping stranded migrants.

Human rights and fundamental freedoms remained core elements in the capacity building and training programmes provided through CSDP missions and operations. Issues relating to the human rights of refugees and migrants, and of victims of trafficking in human beings were frequently raised by the EU in human rights dialogues and other bilateral discussions with third countries in 2017. Following the adoption of the 2016 New York Declaration, the EU and its Member States actively participated in the work that lead towards the planned adoption in 2018 of the UN Global Compacts on Migration and on Refugees, and continued to support the UN in this endeavour, in the context of promoting effective multilateralism.

The EU supported the ILO's work on fair recruitment, which is crucial in the prevention and eradication of labour exploitation of migrant workers and the promotion of their rights. The EU actively contributed to the General Discussion on fair and effective labour migration governance at the June 2017 International Labour Conference (ILC). The EU contribution was also decisive in the adoption of a new international standard - Employment and Decent Work for Peace and Resilience Recommendation No. 205 - at the 2017 International Labour Conference. The new standard updates older guidance to cover contemporary crisis situations arising from conflicts and disasters and emphasises the need to protect livelihoods through employment and social protection measures with special attention to population groups made vulnerable by crises, including refugees and migrants. It is the first time that mention is made to training and employment in an international standard of the access of refugees. The EU actively supported Member States' work related to migration policies and the labour market integration of refugees and legally staying migrants, in accordance with Member States' competences.

In 2017, the Commission carried out many actions implementing the Action Plan on the integration of third-country nationals⁴⁸ including pre-departure actions and measures in the areas of education, labour market and vocational training, access to basic services and active participation and social inclusion, as well as enhanced coordination and funding.

In 2017, the EU supported initiatives aimed at the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals, including in respect of the targets dealing with migration, trafficking of human beings, forced labour, child labour and decent work.

The EU provided significant financial assistance in 2017 to promote the rights of migrants and refugees. The EU worked with all relevant stakeholders to ensure that all funding sources available to support integration (ESIF, FEAD, AMIF, ISF, EIB) are used to their maximum potential and in an integrated and strategically coordinated way. In 2017 the European Programme for Employment and Social Innovation funded several projects to facilitate a swift labour market integration of asylum seekers, refugees and their family members through a call for proposal.

The European Social Fund (ESF) is available to EU Member States' integration activities such as language courses, skills identification and vocational training for legally residing migrants, including refugees and asylum seekers that have obtained the right to work. The Fund for European Aid to the Most Deprived (FEAD) can support migrants (if Member States decide to include them in the target group), by providing them with immediate relief (food, basic material assistance) and promoting their social inclusion, regardless of their legal status.

The EU stepped up its efforts to address trafficking in human beings, with an equal focus on protection of the victims of this grave human rights violation, prosecution of perpetrators and prevention of the crime. Significant funding continued to be allocated to projects focusing on trafficking in human beings, in the EU and beyond, including in the context of migration, through a wide range of funding instruments.

⁴⁸ [Action Plan on the integration of third country nationals, COM\(2016\) 377 final](#)

The EU continued to support projects implemented by civil society organisations to promote and protect the human rights of migrants outside the European Union through the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights.

On the basis of the Visa Code and the Charter of Fundamental Rights, the Commission considers that visa applicants have the right to a non –discriminatory treatment of their visa application and that this right is to be protected by a judicial appeal procedure. This right to a judicial appeal against a visa refusal been confirmed by the Court of Justice of the European union in the ruling delivered on 13 December 2017 in case C-403/16 El Hassani.

Moreover, in 2017 the EU and the Member States set up an expert group to examine the specific contribution of youth work to integration of young migrants and refugees, in accordance with Member States’ competences. The expert group is expected to conclude its work by the end of 2018.

Trade

Trade policy can support the advancement of and respect for human rights in third countries in conjunction with other EU external policies, in particular development cooperation. This involves various policy instruments, including the EU’s Aid for Trade, the unilateral trade preferences scheme, and provisions in bilateral and regional trade agreements. Human rights considerations, including fundamental principles and rights at work, are integrated into unilateral preferences, EU export controls policy and EU bilateral free trade agreements.

The current Generalised Scheme of Preferences (GSP) Regulation has been in force since 1 January 2014 and continues to provide the world's most generous unilateral trade preferences to support economic development in developing countries. In 2017, nine countries benefitted from the particularly advantageous trade preferences (GSP+) on the condition that they ratify and effectively implement 27 international conventions, including core human and labour rights conventions. Georgia left GSP+ on 1 January 2017 as it benefits from a Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreement (DCFTA) with the EU, while Sri Lanka re-entered the GSP+ scheme in May 2017 after its successful application. In January 2018, the Commission will publish its second biennial report on the implementation of GSP, accompanied by a staff working document covering GSP+ country assessments.

The European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR) includes dedicated support of EUR 4.5 million to empower civil society actors to contribute to the monitoring and effective implementation of the 27 relevant conventions ratified by GSP+ beneficiary countries.

The EU is supporting relevant trading partners and several of the GSP+ beneficiaries through grants to the International Labour Organisation, to contribute to the application of the ILO core labour rights conventions, as well as capacity-building to comply with reporting obligations. The GSP+ countries that are supported by EU-funded ILO projects are: Armenia, Cabo Verde, Mongolia, Pakistan, the Philippines, and Paraguay.

In 2017, the EU continued work on the Bangladesh Compact together with the Bangladeshi government, the ILO, the USA and Canada to improve core labour standards and safety in the textile industry. The EU also took an active role in the Initiative to Promote Fundamental Labour Rights and Practices in Myanmar, which is supported by Myanmar, Denmark, the European Union, Japan, the United States, and the ILO.

The European Commission conducts Impact Assessments (IAs) before the launch of trade negotiations or the introduction of new or revised regulations governing EU trade policy. It also carries out Sustainability Impact Assessments (SIAs) in parallel with trade negotiations and evaluations after implementation of the agreement. The EU is committed to assessing impact on human rights in IAs, SIAs and evaluations. A special guidance tool for assessing human rights in trade actions was used in all assessments carried out, including SIAs for the EU-China and EU-Burma/Myanmar Investment Agreements, the EU-Turkey IA for modernisation of the Customs Union, as well as IAs for negotiations of free trade agreements (FTAs) with New Zealand, Australia and Chile.

Free trade agreements negotiated and concluded after 2009 are linked to the human rights provisions set out in the respective political framework agreements between the parties. In 2017 EU concluded a free trade agreement with Japan; essential elements are contained in the Strategic Partnership Agreement. Both agreements should be signed in 2018. If there is no political framework agreement in force between the EU and its trading partner, an essential elements clause and suspension possibilities are entered into the free trade agreement, which can be enacted in case of human rights abuse.

The EU's recently negotiated trade agreements (with Georgia, Moldova, Ukraine, Canada, South Korea, Colombia-Peru, Central America, Singapore, Vietnam and Japan) contain commitments to implement the fundamental ILO conventions under the chapter on Trade and Sustainable Development. Two of labour conventions are of particular relevance to gender, concerning equal remuneration and non-discrimination (ILO Conventions 100 and 111). However, other fundamental labour-related provisions have a gender dimension, such as those on forced and child labour. In the near future, the Commission hopes to work with Chile on gender-specific provisions in the context of the modernisation exercise of the Association Agreement. In addition, one of the 27 treaties to be ratified and implemented in order to benefit from GSP + is the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. At a the multilateral level, the Joint Declaration on Trade and Women's Economic Empowerment was endorsed by 118 World Trade Organisation members and observers on 12 December 2017. It is a collective initiative to increase the participation of women in trade.

The EU's Aid for Trade strategy has been updated, with the Council adopting conclusions on the Commission communication of 13 November 2017. The updated strategy builds on 10 years of EU Aid for Trade assistance and reflects the significant changes in the political context both globally - in particular the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development - and at EU level - including the new European Consensus on Development and the Trade for All communication. Those Council conclusions recognise that Aid for Trade can be an effective driver for promoting human rights. This echoes a section in the Commission communication on the same topic.

As regards EU export controls, negotiations on the 2016 Commission legislative proposal⁴⁹ to modernise EU dual-use export controls in order to ensure effective controls, on the export of information and communications technology (ICT) products that could be used for human rights violations, were advancing in 2017 both in the Council and the Parliament, and were publicly debated with industry and civil society stakeholders. The Commission is also engaging partners in an effort to promote a convergent global regulation of the trade of these sensitive technologies and has been providing export control outreach to some 32 countries, assisting them in strengthening their national export control systems.

The Commission promotes private fair and ethical trade schemes, and considers that they can be beneficial to the strengthening of sustainable development principles, including respect for human rights. In 2017 it launched the first 'EU Cities for Fair and Ethical Trade' award to acknowledge and raise awareness of the initiatives carried out in the EU at local level, and a market study on the demand for sustainably-sourced products in the EU.

⁴⁹ COM(2016)616 of 28 September 2016

At the multilateral level, the EU supports the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT), which aims at enhancing responsibility and transparency in the arms trade and which entered into force at the end of 2014. The Treaty requires, inter alia, 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, be assessed as part of arms export decisions. Arms exports are also prohibited if they could be used to commit genocide, crimes against humanity, grave breaches of the Geneva Convention, attacks directed against civilians, or other war crimes as defined by relevant international conventions. In this context, the EU continued to promote the Treaty's ratification by all UN Member States. In addition to these diplomatic efforts, the EU-funded ATT implementation support programme has so far provided technical assistance to 17 countries, assisting them in strengthening their national systems in line with the requirements of the Treaty.

Development cooperation

The EU remains committed to integrating human rights, civil and political as well as economic, social and cultural, into development cooperation. This commitment is strongly embedded in the new European Consensus on Development⁵⁰, adopted in June 2017. The new Consensus provides a joint vision and a shared framework for a common approach to development cooperation for the EU institutions and Member States, as one important part of the overall EU response to the UN 2030 Agenda and its Sustainable Development Goals. In addition, the Global Strategy for the European Union's Foreign and Security Policy (EUGS)⁵¹, adopted in 2016, sets out the EU's overall vision for a joined-up, credible and responsive engagement in the world.

Globally, the EU is promoting the advancement of all human rights through development cooperation using a rights-based approach (RBA). The RBA aims at mainstreaming human rights among a range of cross-cutting elements into EU operational activities for development, covering arrangements both at headquarters and in the field for the synchronisation of human rights and development cooperation activities.

⁵⁰ The New European Consensus on Development – Our World, Our Dignity, Our Future', adopted jointly by the Council, the European Parliament and the Commission

⁵¹ Shared Vision, common Action: A Stronger Europe – A Global Strategy for the European Union's Foreign And Security Policy, June 2016

The EU and its Member States promote inclusion and participation, non-discrimination, equality and equity, transparency and accountability, and address the multiple discriminations faced by vulnerable and marginalised people.

Recognising the role of civil society organisations as promoters of democracy, defenders of human rights and the rule of law, the EU and its Member States promote civil society space and support building its capacities. Recognising also that good governance, democracy, the rule of law and human rights are preconditions for sustainable development and stability, the EU and its Member States uses the full range of partnerships and instruments, including development cooperation, to promote accountable and transparent institutions, independent and impartial courts through capacity building, and support the provision of fair justice, access to legal assistance and initiatives to tackle corruption.

15. EU Instruments

The EU has a broad range of policies, tools and external financing instruments at its disposal to promote and defend human rights. These include public diplomacy, such as EU statements and declarations, more discreet diplomacy tools including démarches and political dialogues, but also human rights guidelines and human rights country strategies, regular human rights dialogues, and financial cooperation projects, including support for civil society. The EU strives to ensure the best interplay of these instruments, using them most effectively and in conjunction with each other, in order to achieve the best results. Human rights issues should not be confined to human rights dialogues, for instance, but included in the agenda of other meetings, including political or other dialogues, for example visa liberalisation, and summits.

Human Rights Guidelines

The EU has adopted 11 sets of guidelines, which set out priority areas for external action. The guidelines represent a strong political signal about priorities for the Union. The guidelines are updated regularly, and serve as a practical tool to guide EU actors throughout the world when implementing EU human rights priorities at local level. In 2017, the EU updated the guidelines on the Rights of the Child.

The following guidelines have been adopted by the Council:

- EU Guidelines on the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of the Child - Leave no Child Behind (2017)
- EU Human Rights Guidelines on Freedom of Expression Online and Offline (2014)
- EU Guidelines on the promotion and protection of freedom of religion or belief (2013)
- Guidelines to promote and protect the enjoyment of all human rights by lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTI) persons (2013)
- EU Guidelines on Death Penalty: revised and updated version (2013)
- Guidelines to EU Policy towards third countries on torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment - an update of the guidelines (2012)
- EU Guidelines on promoting compliance with International Humanitarian Law (IHL) (2009)
- EU guidelines on human rights dialogues with third countries – update (2008)
- EU Guidelines on Children and Armed Conflict (2008)
- Ensuring protection – European Union Guidelines on Human Rights Defenders (2008)
- EU guidelines on violence against women and girls and combating all forms of discrimination against them (2008)

Human Rights and Democracy Country Strategies

These strategies are prepared, to a large extent, at local level by EU Delegations and Member States' embassies, after close consultation with relevant interlocutors. They are based on a political and operational analysis of the human rights situation in a given country. They identify the top priorities for EU action on human rights and democracy, define long- and short-term key objectives, and set out concrete actions to achieve these objectives in a specific country. More than 120 strategies have been fully updated for 2016-2020, and now incorporate a focused democracy analysis. Among these strategies, the rule of law is the most frequently identified priority followed by women's rights, democracy, the rights of the child and civil society. These strategies and their implementation reports are an essential tool in ensuring policy consistency and in preparing high level visits and political dialogues.

Human Rights Dialogues

Over the years, human rights dialogues have been established with an increasing number of countries. Their objectives include: discussing questions of mutual interest and enhancing cooperation on human rights in multilateral fora such as the United Nations, enabling the EU to share its concerns on human rights violations with partner countries; information-gathering, and endeavouring to improve the human rights situation in the partner country concerned. These dialogues are key instruments for the EU to engage bilaterally on human rights, including on specific themes such as torture and ill-treatment, the death penalty, freedom of religion or belief, freedom of expression online and offline, disabilities, gender equality and women's rights and the rights of the children, fundamental rights and principles at work, and cooperation in multilateral fora.

Prior to human rights dialogues, consultations are carried out with civil society in Brussels and in the country hosting the dialogue. Debriefings on the outcomes of the dialogues are also held. Policy fora and dialogues are complemented by technical meetings with civil society organisations throughout the year, in which the EU shares information on activities and policies. Dedicated civil society seminars are also held back to back with a number of human rights dialogues.

The 13th EU-AU human rights dialogue

The year 2017 was marked by the organisation of the 12th and the 13th African Union (AU) – European Union (EU) Human Rights Dialogue, both led by Mr Stavros Lambrinidis, the EU Special Representative for Human Rights.

The two Dialogues took place at a key moment for the partnership between Europe and Africa with the adoption of the joint communication for a renewed impetus of the Africa-EU Partnership, the successful organisation of the fifth AU-EU summit and preliminary exchanges in view of the opening of negotiations of the Post-Cotonou Partnership Agreement. The 13th Dialogue, which took place on 31 October 2017 in Banjul, The Gambia, coincided with the 30th anniversary of the African Commission on Human and People's Rights.

The AU and the EU converged on the need to build a stronger, deeper and more action-oriented strategic partnership to ensure the promotion, protection and fulfilment of human rights and fundamental freedoms on both continents, as per international legal framework.

In 2017, the EU held human rights dialogues and consultations with 36 partner countries and regional groupings (ASEAN and the AU). The EU had its first sectoral dialogue on Human Rights and Governance with Ethiopia, which was the first formal dialogue between the two sides under the June 2016 EU-Ethiopia Strategic Engagement. The EU also had its first human rights dialogue with Mongolia, with the purpose of supporting Mongolia's adherence to its bilateral and international obligations in relation to human rights, rule of law and democratic principles. The sixth high-level human rights dialogue between the EU and Brazil took place in 2017, in Brussels. Discussions on human rights also continued with Cuba, with a view to formalising the EU-Cuba human rights dialogue under the Political Dialogue and Cooperation Agreement, which entered into provisional application on 1 November 2017. The EU and Iran held their second informal discussion on human rights in Tehran as part of the EU-Iran High-Level Dialogue.

European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights

The European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR) is one of the key external financing instruments used to promote and support democracy and human rights worldwide. Building on its key strength, which is the ability 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 civil society organisations.

List of Acronyms and Initialisms

ACHPR	African Commission of Human and Peoples' Rights
AMIF	Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
ASEM	Asia-Europe Meeting
ATT	Arms Trade Treaty
AU	African Union
CFSP	Common Foreign and Security Policy
CoE	Council of Europe
COHOM	Council Working Party on Human Rights
CRPD	Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
CSDP	Common Security and Defence Policy
CSO	civil society organisation
DCI	Development Cooperation Instrument
DoP	Declaration of Principles for International Election Observation
DPO	disabled peoples' organisations
DPRK	Democratic People's Republic of Korea
DRC	Democratic Republic of Congo
EDF	European Development Fund
EEAS	European External Action Service
EEM	Election Expert Missions
EIB	European Investment Bank

EIDHR	European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights
ENI	European Neighbourhood Instrument
ENPI	The European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument
EOM	election observation mission
ESCR	economic, social and cultural rights
ESF	European Social Fund
ESIF	European Structural and Investment Funds
EU	European Union
EU MS	EU Member States
EUDEL	EU Delegation(s)
EUGS	The European Union's Global Strategy
EUNAVFOR MED	European Union Naval Force — Mediterranean
EUSR	EU Special Representative on Human Rights
EWS	Conflict Early Warning System
FEAD	Fund for European Aid to the Most Deprived
FFM	fact-finding mission
FoRB	Freedom of Religion or Belief
FRA	European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights
G20	The G20 (or G-20 or Group of Twenty) is an international forum for the governments and central bank governors from Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Canada, China, France, Germany, India, Indonesia, Italy, Japan, Mexico, the Russian Federation, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, South Korea, Turkey, the United Kingdom, the United States, and the European Union

G7	The Group of Seven or G7 is a group consisting of Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, the United Kingdom and the United States.
GBV	gender-based violence
GIZ	The Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit
GRULAC	Group of Latin American and Caribbean Countries
GSP	Generalised Scheme of Preferences
GSP+	EU Generalised Scheme of Preferences for developing countries
HRC	United Nations Human Rights Council
HRD	human rights defender
HRDCS	Human Rights and Democracy Country Strategy
HR/VP	High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy / Vice-President of the Commission (Federica Mogherini)
IA	impact assessment
ICANN	the Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers
ICC	International Criminal Court
ICERD	Convention for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination
ICRC	International Committee of the Red Cross
IGF	Internet Governance Forum
IGWG	Open-ended Intergovernmental Working Group on Transnational Corporations and Other Business Enterprises with Respect to Human Rights
IHL	international humanitarian law
ILC	International Labour Conference

ILO	International Labour Organisation
ILS	international labour standards
IOM	International Organisation for Migration
ISF	Internal Security Fund
LGBTI	lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and intersex
MNE	multinational enterprises
MEP	Member of the European Parliament
MIPAA	Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing
MPM	Media Pluralism Monitor
NAP	National Action Plans
NATO	The North Atlantic Treaty Organisation
NGO	non-governmental organisation
NHRIs	national human rights institutions
OAS	Organization of American States
ODIHR	Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
OHCHR	Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights
OIC	Organisation of Islamic Cooperation
OIF	Organisation internationale de la Francophonie
OSCE	Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe
PAG	Principal Advisor on Gender

RBA	rights-based approach
RBC	Responsible Business Conduct
RIS	Regional Implementation Strategy
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SE	Special Envoy
SIA	sustainability impact assessments
SOGI	sexual orientation and gender identity
TPNRD	Transatlantic Policy Network on Religion and Diplomacy
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNECE	United Nations Economic Commission for Europe
UNGA	United Nations General Assembly
UNGPs	United Nations Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations Children’s Fund
UNSC	United Nations Security Council
UNSCR	United Nations Security Council Resolutions
UPR	Universal Periodic Review
WSIS	World Summit on the Information Society
