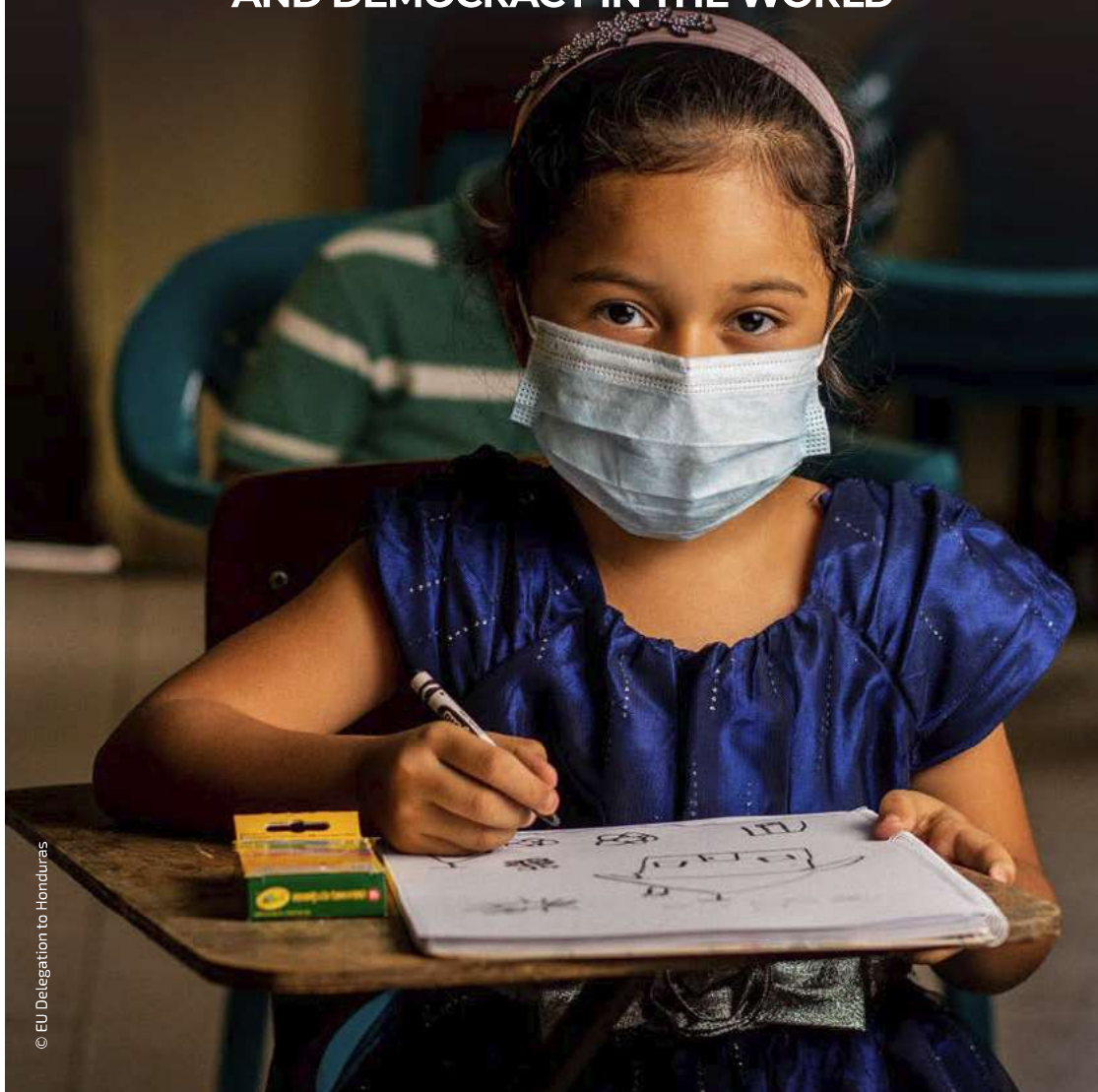




REPORT OF THE **EU HIGH REPRESENTATIVE FOR
FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND SECURITY POLICY**

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AND DEMOCRACY IN THE WORLD



to establish an EU-initiated forum with Afghan women leaders. The forum would be accompanied by a structured, continuing dialogue with women representing various sectors, both from the Afghan diaspora and within Afghanistan, including civil society. The EUSR for Human Rights also engaged on the situation in Afghanistan and discussed the plight of women and girls with partner countries, civil society and UN actors, including with the High Commissioner for Human Rights.

Gender equality, women's and girls' enjoyment of all human rights and their empowerment were consistently raised in bilateral political and human rights dialogues and sub-committees, informal working groups and human rights-related discussions and consultations with partner countries, based on the human rights situation on the ground, and identifying specific actions and deliverables. EU delegations carried out strategic activities across the world to promote the full enjoyment of human rights by women and girls and further activities planned in the human rights and democracy country strategies for 2021-2024, a large majority of which included gender equality as a key priority.

Activities carried out by delegations included, inter alia, démarches, public statements, consultations with local civil society actors, in particular women's rights organisations and women's movements, activities with the private sector, awareness-raising campaigns, trainings and advocacy events. Specific initiatives were undertaken to address existing inequalities and multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination against women and girls, which are often entrenched and systemic.

EU support to gender-responsive local governance in Bosnia and Herzegovina

The EU Delegation to Bosnia and Herzegovina implemented a project with the non-governmental organisation 'Academy for women' reaching out to a group of newly elected women councillors and introducing them to the EU integration process and universal values of gender equality.

THE INTERNATIONAL CRIMINAL COURT

The EU continued to participate in the global fight to end impunity, to ensure accountability, in particular for the most serious crimes under international law, and to help to provide justice and redress for the victims of atrocities. In that context, the EU provided political, diplomatic and financial support to the International Criminal Court (ICC)¹¹¹. The EU also supported other international criminal tribunals and ad hoc national tribunals, as well as truth and reconciliation commissions and redress mechanisms to protect the rights of victims to justice and reparation.

Throughout the period, significant work was conducted to ensure that support to the ICC, including the ratification of the Rome Statute, remained high on the EU policy agenda and is reflected in relevant EU human rights dialogues and consultations with partner countries. For example, the issue of ratification and national implementation of the Rome Statute was raised in the EU-Ukraine human rights dialogue.

The EU continued to promote the universality of the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court also through its annual *démarche* campaign encouraging the ratification of, or accession to, the Rome Statute. A specific clause to this effect was included in agreements negotiated with non-EU countries.

The EU and its Member States increased their efforts to strengthen cooperation with the Court. In particular, the EU undertook action to encourage voluntary cooperation of states with the ICC, namely voluntary agreements on the protection and relocation of victims and witnesses, interim release and the enforcement of sentences.

¹¹¹ In accordance with Council Decision 2011/168/CFSP and the 2011 action plan on its implementation, as well as part of the implementation of the 2006 Agreement between the ICC and the EU on cooperation and assistance.

respect to **Afghanistan**, promoting IHL was raised in bilateral meetings with donors and partners, and as part of the Team Europe approach coordinating the humanitarian response. A few days after the Taliban's takeover, the EUSR for Human Rights met with the Chair of the Afghan Independent Human Rights Commission to discuss the humanitarian situation, alleged violations of IHL and the situation of human rights defenders.

In **Ethiopia**, IHL has been at the forefront of EU advocacy. The EU has repeatedly called on the parties to protect civilians and to allow safe and unhindered access to all areas affected by the war. It has called for independent investigations on reported war crimes possibly committed by all parties to the conflict. The EU has also condemned the use of starvation as a method of warfare in besieged Tigray. The EUSR for Human Rights met with the Minister of Finance and Minister for Women, Children and Youth on the situation. He also reiterated with the head of the Ethiopian Human Rights Commission the EU concerns in relation to the humanitarian crisis, the need for humanitarian access, addressing sexual violence and monitoring and documenting alleged violations.

Humanitarian Protection and IHL constitute a basic entry point in the EU's humanitarian strategy in the **Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC)**, with protection of civilians as a cornerstone. For example, every health programme contains an IHL component to promote the safety for health workers and in health facilities, while education programmes include measures to optimise safety for children and promote the Safe School Declaration. With respect to **Yemen**, the EU, together with participants of the Senior Officials Meeting III committed to foster high-level diplomacy towards the parties to the conflict (including through high-level missions at greater frequency by the UN, NGOs and donors) to protect civilians and uphold international law. A number of joint messages were articulated and advocacy demarches were done towards the parties to the conflict. The EUSR for Human Rights met with the Yemeni Minister for Legal