



Council of the
European Union

**Brussels, 20 June 2016
(OR. en)**

10255/16

**COHOM 79
COPS 192
CFSP/PESC 485
CSDP/PSDC 344
FREMP 116
INF 110
JAI 579
RELEX 517**

OUTCOME OF PROCEEDINGS

From:	General Secretariat of the Council
On	20 June 2016
To:	Delegations
No. prev. doc.:	10138/16 COHOM 72 COPS 188 CFSP/PESC 478 CSDP/PSDC 338 FREMP 111 INF 108 JAI 570 RELEX 513
Subject:	EU Annual Report on Human Rights and Democracy in the World in 2015 – Thematic Part

Delegations will find in the annex the EU Annual Report on Human Rights and Democracy in the World in 2015 – Thematic Part, adopted by the Council at its 3477th meeting held on 20 June 2016.

**EU ANNUAL REPORT
ON HUMAN RIGHTS AND DEMOCRACY
IN THE WORLD IN 2015**

Thematic Part

(Foreign Affairs Council, 20 June 2016)

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EU Instruments

The EU has a broad range of policies, tools and financing instruments at its disposal to promote and defend human rights. These include public diplomacy (EU Statements and Declarations), more discreet diplomacy tools (demarches⁵ and political dialogues), but also human rights guidelines and human rights country strategies, regular human rights dialogues, and financial cooperation projects including support to civil society. The EU strives to ensure the best interplay of these instruments, i.e. to use 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 are included in the agenda of other meetings, including political or other dialogues (for example, visa liberalization) and summits.

Human Rights Guidelines: the EU has adopted 11 guidelines⁶ which set out priority areas of external action. The guidelines most recently adopted are those on Freedom of Religion or Belief and Freedom of Expression Online and Offline. They are intended primarily to serve as a practical tool to guide EU actors around the world when implementing EU human rights priorities at the local level. Guidelines are updated regularly.

Human Rights Country Strategies: these strategies are prepared to a large extent at the local level by EU Delegations and based on an analysis of the human rights situation in a given country. These strategies have become central in helping ensure policy consistency. They identify the top priorities for EU action on human rights and democracy, define long- and short-term key objectives and describe concrete activities to be carried out to reach these objectives in the respective country.

⁵ A demarche is a type of diplomatic representation. It is a formal approach made to the representative of a third country or international organisation to persuade, inform or gather the formal views of a government on a specific issue. It can take written or oral form.

⁶ For a full list of the 11 EU Human Rights Guidelines:
http://eeas.europa.eu/human_rights/docs/index_en.htm

The EU continued to be one of the largest financial contributors to transitional justice initiatives worldwide, providing financing for justice, truth-seeking initiatives, institutional reform and reparations programmes including through support to civil society and victims' groups. Projects funded in 2015 ranged from a small pilot project in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) supporting access to justice for victims to providing large scale support to the training of prosecutors and outreach campaigns for the UN International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY). The EU also supported access to justice for victims through a global programme on gender-sensitive transitional justice implemented jointly with UN Women.

The EU continued to work closely with the UN (in particular the Special Rapporteur for the promotion of truth, justice, reparations and guarantees of non-recurrence), regional organisations and civil society in supporting transitional justice.

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)**¹⁰, 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 in support of the cause of the Court.

One example of such support has been the EU's ongoing engagement towards the universality of the Rome Statute and promoting a better understanding of the ICC's mandate. The EU has continued to make every effort to further this process with third States, in particular during its human rights dialogues, through systematic demarche campaigns worldwide, the organisation of dedicated local or regional seminars, the systematic inclusion of a clause in agreements with third countries, encouraging the ratification of or accession to the ICC Statute as well as offering assistance in implementation, or through financial support to civil society organisations advocating for the universality of the Rome Statute.

¹⁰ In accordance with Council Decision 2011/168/CFSP of 21 March 2011 and with the 2006 Agreement on cooperation and assistance.

The issue of capital punishment was consistently raised with retentionist countries and featured in the agendas of political dialogues or dedicated human rights dialogues. Through public statements, the EU deplored the continuing use of the death penalty in various parts of the world: Iran, Iraq, Saudi Arabia, Pakistan, Belarus, Egypt, Japan, Indonesia, Singapore, China, Vietnam, Taiwan and the USA were a particular focus of attention, but statements were issued and demarches were carried out in many other countries, based on the minimum standards defined by international law and the EU Guidelines on the Death Penalty. The EU has given considerable emphasis to the violation of those minimum standards, stressing the inadmissibility of the use of death penalty for minors, persons with intellectual disabilities and for crimes which are not among the "most serious", such as drug offences.

The EU continued to actively support the efforts taken by the African Union towards the adoption of an Additional Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Abolition of the Death Penalty, as confirmed in the recent EU-African Union Human Rights dialogue of 24 November. Similarly, the EU is taking a regional approach to support regional and local stakeholders engaging on the death penalty in South-East Asia. It also welcomed the abolition of the death penalty in Fiji, Suriname, Mongolia and the US State of Nebraska.

To mark the European Day against the Death Penalty and the World Day against the Death Penalty on 10 October, the EU and the Council of Europe issued a joint statement reaffirming their opposition to the use of capital punishment in all circumstances, and their commitment to the abolition of the death penalty worldwide. In parallel, numerous EU Delegations commemorated this important date by organising various events such as debates, conferences and other public awareness activities.