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**Reports by the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human
Rights and the Secretary-General
and reports of intergovernmental working groups**

Statement by

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Mr. President,

The European Union welcomes the opportunity to continue the dialogue with you, Madam High Commissioner. We appreciate the answers you provided to our questions yesterday, and I would like to take this opportunity to now address a few of the issues reflected in the various reports under consideration today.

The Candidate Countries Turkey, Croatia* and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia*, the Countries of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidates Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Serbia, and the EFTA country Iceland, member of the European Economic Area, as well as Ukraine and the Republic of Moldova align themselves with this declaration.

The EU acknowledges the most valuable work that your office in Nepal is doing. We recognize the improvement of the human rights situation in Nepal. But we also share your assessment that "there remain serious concerns regarding ongoing human rights abuses, and that the improvements which have taken place remain fragile". We therefore believe that the circumstances in Nepal warrant a continuation of your office's work for at least two more years.

Are the authorities in Kathmandu prepared to allow your office to continue to work for an extended period?

The EU appreciates your dedication towards improving the situation in Afghanistan. We share both your analysis and the view that "light and shadow" require the continued support of the international community to the Afghan government in this difficult stage of rebuilding the nation. In this context, it is all the more important to support the Afghan Human Rights Commission. The implementation of the Action Plan on Peace, Reconciliation and Justice must be enhanced.

We also welcome Colombia's ongoing co-operation with your office. This constructive approach constitutes an excellent example of a country's active commitment to improve a difficult human rights situation as outlined in your report. Your office continues to play a crucial role in this process. We therefore strongly support the renewal of the Office's mandate in its entirety, and were hence very pleased to hear the Colombian Vice-President, in his statement yesterday, confirm the agreement to prolong the mandate of the Office in Bogota. The envisaged evaluation of the Office should involve all stakeholders, in order to further improve the collaboration between the Office and the Government and to identify areas of priority attention.

We were pleased to learn that Colombia, as an observer state to the Human Rights Council, is ready to volunteer as one of the first countries to undergo the Universal Periodic Review.

* *Croatia and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.*

The EU has taken due note of the meeting you had on 6 December with the Permanent Representative of the DPRK, to discuss the possibilities of providing technical assistance to that country. We understand that the DPRK did not express an interest in receiving technical cooperation, and that the reasons brought forward related to the government's opposition to previous CHR resolutions on the DPRK.

Do you see any linkage between your offer to provide technical cooperation and these resolutions? What kind of technical cooperation do you have in mind?

The European Union notes with satisfaction that, according to the report of the Secretary General on the question of the death penalty, the trend towards abolition and a more restrictive application continues. I would like to reiterate that the European Union considers that the abolition of the death penalty contributes to the enhancement of human dignity and the progressive development of human rights.

Madam High Commissioner,

The EU welcomes the report of the Working Group on the Right to Development and is pleased to note its adoption by consensus, thanks to the excellent guidance of the Working Group's Chair, Ambassador Salama. We would like to take this opportunity to also commend the work of the High Level Task Force and its Chair, Prof. Stephen Marks. Both groups are making a tremendous contribution towards improving the practical implementation of the Right to Development, and we therefore look forward to continuing our active cooperation with them.

The European Union congratulates Ambassador Martabit for his able leadership in the Working Group on follow up to Durban. The panel discussion on the role of national plans of action in combating racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance during the past session has permitted us to demonstrate our commitment in a very practical way. We hope this fruitful exchange of experience will find a concrete follow up. We definitely can learn from each other in sharing best practices to fight racism in all its forms and manifestations. We were particularly happy to learn that the experts with whom we discussed during the second half of the working group will consult with all relevant stakeholders in different regions in the world.

How do you see the role of your anti-discrimination unit in the exchange and promotion of best practices?

Thank you
