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Statement by

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on behalf of the European Union

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Item 4

Human Rights situations that require the Council's attention

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Geneva, 24 September 2007

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EU Statement

Item 4 - Human Rights situations that require the Council's attention

Mr President,

I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union.

The Candidate Countries Croatia* and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia*, as well as Georgia align themselves with this statement.

1. When creating this Human Rights Council, the General Assembly established that it should address situations of violations of human rights and make recommendations thereon. It is our common responsibility to fulfil also this part of the mandate and devote our attention to human rights violations wherever they may occur.

2. Let me reiterate that EU Member States do not consider themselves to be above criticism. No country in the world has a perfect human rights record. The EU and its Member States are constantly seeking to improve their human rights mechanisms and to promote transparency and accountability in their policies.

Mr. President,

3. In accordance with its mandate and with a view to help improve them, we would like to call the Council's attention to some particular situations:

4. The EU remains deeply concerned with the HR situation in Zimbabwe. The EU has been following and regularly condemned the continued use of arbitrary arrests, torture, intimidation and violence by the police and other security forces towards Zimbabwean citizens and human rights defenders. We regret the economic policies conducted in recent years by the Government of Zimbabwe, which have resulted in food insecurity, with millions now relying on food aid and a constant flow of refugees crossing the borders into the surrounding countries. The EU is concerned with the significant and increasing adverse impact this situation continues to have on the region. We commend the efforts made by SADC and President Mbeki in facilitating talks between the

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

Zimbabwean political forces and hope that these mediations will result in free and fair elections held in accordance with SADC norms and standards.

5. Also in Iran we have been observing a worrying deterioration of the human rights situation. Executions are increasing, including against juvenile offenders. The recent stoning to death of a man accused of adultery and the growing use of collective and public executions are particularly disturbing. The use of cruel and unusual punishments such as flogging and amputation, the intensification of discrimination and other human rights violations against people belonging to minority groups and religious communities such as the Bahá'í, as well as clampdowns and mass arrests of human rights defenders and civil rights activists are also matters of great concern. The EU also regrets that Iran has chosen not to take part in a bilateral human rights dialogue.

6. The EU notes with concern the human rights situation in Sri Lanka, with a worrying increase in reported abuses by Government forces, as well as serious crimes by the LTTE and the Karuna faction, such as targeted civilian killings, extortion and the use of child soldiers. The EU urges that adequate protection be given to human rights defenders, humanitarian workers and journalists. The EU asks that perpetrators be held accountable and we call on the Sri Lanka Government to allow impartial and effective investigations on human rights violations and to ensure that these adhere to international norms and standards. The EU welcomes the recent initiative by the Government of Sri Lanka to invite the High Commissioner on Human Rights, as well as two Special Rapporteurs. We strongly encourage Sri Lanka to agree with the Office of High Commissioner on the establishment of an OHCHR monitoring field presence in Sri Lanka.

Mr President,

7. The EU condemns the gross and systematic violations of human rights in DPRK and Burma/Myanmar. We are particularly worried with the recent clampdowns on peaceful demonstrations in Burma/Myanmar, and we urge the authorities to release the detainees and political prisoners, including Aung San Suu Kyi. We also urge the authorities of both these States to start cooperating with the UN human rights mechanisms and to respect their international obligations. We expect to address both these situations in more detail in the next session of the Council, when the reports of the relevant Special Rapporteurs will be considered.

8. The EU continues to follow closely the situation in Darfur, where gross and systematic violations of human rights and grave breaches of international law still persist. The EU fully supports the implementation mechanism established by this Council in March and we are looking forward to hearing the experts' interim report. We welcome UN Security Council resolution 1769 mandating an AU/UN Hybrid force for Darfur and urge all parties on the ground to cooperate for its full and rapid deployment and to immediately cease all hostilities. While we continue to focus on Darfur, we cannot ignore other Human Rights violations occurring elsewhere in the country. The EU urges the Government of Sudan to bring to justice those responsible for the recent cases of abductions, rapes or sex slavery and other human rights violations. The EU is

concerned with the appointment as co-chair of a governmental Human Rights Committee of an individual that has been indicted by the ICC for war crimes.

9. The EU is following the situation in Iraq with great concern and appeals on the continued efforts of the Iraqi Government and people to enable the various political, religious and ethnic groups to co-exist peacefully. We are deeply concerned about the humanitarian crisis in Iraq and other countries in the region. We call on the Iraqi Government and all other States and parties involved to work in cooperation to settle the conflict, put an end to human rights violations and to protect civilians, including IDPs and other vulnerable groups.

10. The Human Rights situation in Belarus has deteriorated with the systematic violation of civil and political rights. The EU reiterates its appeal to the Belarusian authorities to respect the fundamental rights of its citizens and restrain from harassing and persecuting members of the democratic opposition and other groups. The human rights situation remains precarious in Cuba and, therefore, the EU urges the Cuban authorities to allow visits by international human rights mechanisms.

Mr. President,

11. There is no country with a perfect human rights record and therefore no country is immune from international scrutiny. We have a moral obligation to work together to promote and protect human rights and fundamental freedoms. Let me assure you of the EU's readiness to address these situations and work with all States to improve them.

12. In this context, the EU would like to underline its full commitment to the EU-China human rights dialogue, which enables us to discuss priority issues, including arbitrary detentions, torture and the large-scale use of death penalty, as well as repression of freedom of expression, association and religion. The EU is encouraged by legislative measures taken in the past and by China's willingness to enhance its cooperation with the UN human rights mechanisms. A ratification of ICCPR would send another strong signal concerning China's commitment to respect and promote human rights.

Thank you, Mr. President.