

Thank you Madame High Commissioner,

FINLAND

The EU welcomes this opportunity for a dialogue with the High Commissioner for Human Rights. Already during the first session of the Council, this dialogue proved to be a very good opportunity to take an overview of the recent developments.

This autumn started on a very positive note with the agreement in the Ad Hoc Committee on the draft Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. We attach great importance to a swift ratification by as many Member States as possible. We would like to know how your office could assist states in this process ?

Non-discrimination, including on the grounds of sexual orientation, is at the core of EU's policy. The EU is concerned by the evidence of serious human rights violations against individuals on the basis of their sexual orientation, reported inter alia by Special Procedures and Treaty bodies, as you also underlined in your recent statement in Montreal. In your view, how could we increase the understanding of the importance of this issue in the context of human rights?

The EU welcomes your efforts to strengthen the implementation of human rights through **sustained country engagement strategy**.

Among the encouraging developments and examples of good cooperation between your Office and States, the EU would like to express its support for the continued strong role of your office in **Colombia**, which has made an important contribution to the work of protecting and promoting human rights and international humanitarian law in Colombia, through monitoring, advice, technical cooperation and information activities. The EU underlines the importance of extending the mandate of your office in its current form. ~~We think that~~ an extension of the mandate for several years at a time would be important in terms of ensuring continuity and predictability of these activities. Could you tell us about the plans relating to the further extension of the mandate beyond October 2007?

We welcome the signing of the Memorandum of Understanding between the Government of **Uganda** and your office in January this year, and the work undertaken. This comprehensive MOU demonstrates the commitment of the Government to reinforce the protection and promotion of human rights. We would like to know about the plans of

your office to assist the Government in facilitating appropriate transitional justice and reconciliation processes to bring about sustainable peace and justice in Northern Uganda.

The EU would also like to express its strong support for the continuation of the monitoring and reporting mandate of your Office in **Afghanistan**, as well as further strengthening of the programme of advisory services and technical cooperation, ~~as indicated in your report~~. Could you tell us about the plans of the UN to provide further assistance to the Government in the implementation of the Afghan National Development Strategy?

The EU also underlines the importance of the expertise and advice of your Office in situations where there is need for independent inquiries into human rights violations.

A positive example is the UN Independent Commission of Inquiry for **Timor Leste**, which is reviewing the violent incidents that took place earlier this year, and which was established upon the request of Prime Minister José Ramos-Horta, at that time the Foreign Minister of Timor-Leste. We would be interested in hearing about the key features of the work of the Commission.

The EU also welcomes the announcement of the President of **Sri Lanka** about his intention to invite an international commission to inquire into recent killings, disappearances and abductions in Sri Lanka. In our view, the involvement of your Office in providing advice on the establishment of the commission would be very important, in order to ensure that the Commission meets the requirements of independence, effectiveness and impartiality, that will ensure that its findings carry legitimacy. Could you briefly describe the key international standards that should guide the establishment of such a commission? We would also strongly support the strengthening of your office's presence in Sri Lanka, to provide capacity-building and technical assistance to the Government, as well as monitoring and reporting on the human rights situation.

The EU attaches great importance to the Council's mandate to contribute towards the prevention of human rights violations and respond promptly to human rights emergencies. The EU is alarmed by the renewed fighting in **Darfur** and the violence directed at the civilian population and humanitarian workers. We are particularly alarmed by the systematic bombings of villages in Darfur. The Secretary-General in his statement to the Security-Council on 11 September stressed the legal and moral

responsibilities of the Government of Sudan to protect its own citizens and reminded all parties to the conflict in Darfur that they will be held accountable for actions and policies which imperil the people of Darfur. The Secretary-General also challenged the international community not to forget the lessons of Rwanda. "Lessons", he said, "are either learned or not; principles are either upheld or scorned. This is no time for middle ground of half-measures or further debate." As the Human Rights Council considers how it can contribute to preventing and reversing the deterioration of the human rights situation on the ground, it would be helpful to hear your assessment of the key measures needed towards this end as well as your assessment of the key measures or changes needed in order to ensure that the human rights monitors can perform their job properly and maximise the protection of actual and potential victims of violations.

During the Special Session on **Lebanon**, you underlined the urgent need to bring clarity to the situation, and referred to the pressing calls for a comprehensive, high-level inquiry into reports of serious violations of human rights law and international humanitarian law in Israel and Lebanon addressing all violations by all parties. Based

*and knowing that
we will discuss this issue
later*

on the information now available, what measures do you think should be taken best to address the situation of human rights in the region ?

[In the event that the issue of secret detention centres/rendition flights is brought up:

The European Union reiterates its commitment to combating terrorism effectively, using all legal means and instruments available. Terrorism is itself a threat to a system of values based on the rule of law.

In combating terrorism, human rights and humanitarian standards have to be maintained. Accordingly, we acknowledge the intention of the United States administration to treat all detainees in accordance with the provisions of the Geneva Convention and the assurances about ICRC (International Committee of the Red Cross) access.

The existence of secret detention facilities where detained persons are kept in a legal vacuum is not in conformity with international humanitarian law and international criminal law.]

I thank you, Madame High Commissioner.+++