SLOVENIA

Statement of the European Union on the agenda item 4: Human rights situations that require Council's attention

Mr. President,

I have the honor to speak on behalf of the European Union (+alignment formula) under the agenda item 4: "The situations that require the Council's attention".

Mr. President,

There is no one country fully beyond reproach and each and every country can work to further improve the human rights and freedoms to all under its jurisdiction.

The Council's capacity to address urgent human rights situations, as stipulated in GA resolution 60/251, is a cornerstone of its mandate, and item 4 therefore provides the opportunity for the Council to fulfill this duty. **The EU however continues to be extremely concerned about a number of grave and serious human rights situations that warrant the Council's attention, amongst which are the following:**

Firstly we would like to mention the human rights situation in the Darfur region of Sudan. It is an issue that, most regrettably, continues to require the close attention of this Council. To this end the EU welcomes the consensus renewal of the mandate of the Special Rapporteur on the Situation of human rights in Sudan at the Council's sixth session. The revised mandate of the Special Rapporteur which now incorporates the tasks of the Group of Experts on Darfur will continue to be a key source for the Council's engagement with this situation and we hope to continue to receive timely follow-up reports. We sincerely call upon the Government of Sudan to cooperate with the Special Rapporteur in the fulfillment of her mandate.

The EU is gravely concerned about the renewed conflict, particularly in West Darfur. It is understood that significant numbers of civilians have been killed and injured during recent bombardments and fighting. This has resulted in thousands of new IDPs and refugees. **The humanitarian agencies are unable to deliver basic necessities of food and water to large numbers of people. The humanitarian and human rights situation for the people in Darfur remains critical. An issue of particular concern is violence against women, including sexual violence. There must not be impunity for the perpetrators of such actions.**

In that respect, the European Union echoes the call made last week by the High Commissioner for all indiscriminate attacks to cease immediately, full humanitarian access to be granted, and that those responsible for attacks on civilians and civilian property must be brought to justice. The EU also calls upon the Government of Sudan to cooperate with the International Criminal Court.

The EU has long been calling for tangible progress in the political process in Burma/Myanmar and the improvement of its dire and unacceptable human rights situation. The EU follows with concern the

restrictions of freedom of expression and association and calls on the government of Burma/Myanmar to fully respect those rights and other international obligations and to cooperate fully with the UN human rights and development mechanisms. **The EU will continue to insist that the authorities of Burma/Myanmar fully respect all international human rights obligations and standards with respect to the announced constitutional referendum, including the international monitoring of it.** We further urge them to enable the follow-up visit of the Special Rapporteur on the human rights situation in the country without further delay.

The EU also notes the very serious and deteriorating situation of all human rights in the DPRK. We are extremely concerned about the wide spread and systematic practice of torture, the imposition of the death penalty for political and religious reasons as well as the absence of the rule of law. We are also concerned about the systematic violations of the economic, social and cultural rights which have led to severe malnutrition and widespread health problems of the population. **We call on the Authorities of the DPRK to start cooperating with the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in DPRK** as well as with other relevant UN mechanisms.

Like the rest of the world, the European Union was deeply shocked by events in Kenya following the elections at the end of last year. Throughout the ensuing period, the EU has called for calm and a negotiated solution to the crisis. We appreciate the cooperation of the Government of Kenya in facilitating the deployment of an OHCHR fact finding mission to Kenya to assess both the recent grave human rights violations, as well as the underlying causes of the conflict. **We keenly await the report of the OHCHR team, which should assist the parties especially to address the underlying issues which gave rise to this cycle of violence. The EU warmly welcomes the reaching of a power-sharing agreement between the parties and looks forward to its full implementation.** We trust that this agreement will provide the basis for the restoration of calm and stability to Kenya, as well as for justice and reconciliation. The EU would welcome activities by the OHCHR and all relevant Special Procedures to continue to assess the human rights situation and to report their findings to the Council.

The EU is deeply concerned with the worsening human rights and humanitarian situation in Somalia. We recall worrying reports of extrajudicial executions, arbitrary detentions, increased sexual violence, torture, targeted killings, the inability of journalists to carry out their work without interference and the absence of a free media. We urge the authorities in Somalia to respect and protect all human rights and to allow safe and unimpeded international humanitarian help. The mandate of the Independent Expert needs to be retained.

The EU closely follows developments in the DR Congo towards improved stability, yet still remains concerned about continuing grave violations of rights. We put great emphasis on the protection of women and children and on the fight against impunity. **The EU is particularly concerned about the recruitment of child soldiers and about wide spread violence, especially sexual violence against women and girls**. We call on the Congolese authorities to ensure the respect of human rights of all and to bring the perpetrators to justice. The country needs to benefit further from the OHCHR's

advisory services and technical assistance, including through the work of the Independent Expert.

The European Union is deeply concerned by the on-going deterioration in the situation of human rights in Iran. Among the grave human rights concerns which arise in Iran is the increasing use of the death penalty, including its frequent use in the absence of respect for internationally recognized safeguards and minimum standards, especially the execution of juvenile offenders. Most alarmingly, according to the draft new penal code, capital punishment seeks to be imposed also for apostasy and witchcraft. The EU is also gravely concerned about instances of torture and repression of political opponents as well as human right defenders. The situation of discrimination against ethnic, linguistic and religious minorities, including the Baha'i community is also of on-going concern. The EU emphasizes that Iran must eliminate, in law and in practice, all forms of discrimination and violence against women and must end impunity for human rights violations.

The European Union recalls that the General Assembly, in its resolution adopted in December 2007, called on the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran to respect fully its human rights obligations and to implement fully the various provisions set out therein. We renew that call here today.

Mr. President,

The EU continues to be deeply concerned about the situation in Sri Lanka, particularly after further acts of violence have occurred in the northern parts of the country. We are concerned about the lack of adequate investigations of serious violations of human rights concerning abductions and enforced disappearances, arbitrary detentions and also about the situation of human rights defenders and journalists. **The EU believes that proper investigations of human rights violations would contribute to end impunity in the country.** We urge the Sri Lankees authorities to fully cooperate with all relevant UN mechanisms and **reiterate our call to Sri Lanka to accept OHCHR's monitoring and advisory human rights mission in the country.**

The EU remains deeply concerned about the human rights situation in Zimbabwe. We have been following the situation there attentively. Despite all our efforts and calls for attention, the humanitarian crisis has steadily worsened, bringing misery to millions of ordinary Zimbabweans. **The EU condemns the continued use of intimidation, violence, arbitrary arrests and torture by the police and other security forces towards Zimbabwean citizens, in particular human rights defenders, opposition and civil society leaders during peaceful demonstrations.** The EU notes the significant impact the situation in Zimbabwe could have on the region, including on regional security and prosperity. **We commend again the efforts of President Mbeki, on behalf of SADC, to improve relations between the Government of Zimbabwe and the opposition and hope that the people of Zimbabwe will be able to exercise their own free will to determine their future in free and fair elections later this month.**

The EU continues to follow with concern the human rights situation in Belarus, where systematic violations of human rights continue especially with regard to freedom of expression, association and assembly, and where human rights defenders face harassment and persecution.

The EU is deeply concerned by reports of harassment, detention and imprisonment of youth activists by the Belarusian authorities in August last year. Reportedly over a dozen youth activists have been given prison sentences ranging from seven to 15 days, while many more have been detained and even assaulted by Belarusian security services. The EU is also concerned about the reported police raid against the Belarusian Congress of Democratic Trade Unions (BKDP), conducted without any warrant in December 2007. We understand its leaders have repeatedly been arrested for their commitment to and defense of fundamental rights of workers and democracy. The EU hopes Belarus authorities will look into these and other cases of harassment and detention.

The EU continues to be concerned about the situation of human rights defenders in China. The EU reiterates its position expressed at September session of this Council

Mr. President, this is not and cannot be a complete list of situations of concern. Unfortunately, there are many others. The EU is very much looking forward to UPR as an important tool that should be used to improve human rights situations in *all* countries through a process of self-evaluation. However, it can not be the *only* means to address urgent and grave situations. Item 4 continues to provide a needed platform to express legitimate concerns by the international community.

Thank you, Mr. President.