

# Speech by Federica Mogherini on the PREDA report – Addressing human rights violations in the context of war crimes, and crimes against humanity, including genocide

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*Check against delivery!*

Thank you very much Mr President [of the European Parliament, Antonio Tajani].

Let me first of all thank our colleague, Christian [Dan Preda] for the work done leading to this report.

Let me also mention, Mr President, that I got used to the night sessions of this plenary – still I do not find it completely normal that we are running more than two hours late. I will be here also tomorrow night – diligently – but still I think that this plenary can work maybe in a more time-efficient manner.

Our work to prevent and address human rights violations is not only – as some of you pointed out – a matter of humanity and values. It is also a matter of interests and strategy for us.

Crimes against humanity can spark the next war, propagate conflict, or the next refugee crises. In a conflict situation, war crimes make post-conflict reconciliation much harder to achieve and our work more difficult also in the post-conflict phase. They destroy the very fabric of society, they spread fear and mistrust, opening wounds that may take decades and a lot, a lot of work to heal.

For all these reasons, our responsibility to protect and the prevention of atrocities are now part of all our main European Union policies. I agree very much with your report's strong focus on prevention – and in these very weeks we have worked to set up a better early warning system inside the European External Action Service, which also focuses on crimes against humanity. Our military and civilian missions have a very special role to play in this regard. Because, if we want to prevent human rights violations, we also must engage with security forces in our partner countries, building their capabilities and training them on the respect of human rights.

I am also glad to see that your report does not forget to address a very important element of what we are working on here: sexual and gender-based violence. Last year alone, the European Union's aid for the prevention and response to this kind of violence reached almost 3,5 million women, men, girls and boys. And let me just mention, our last package in support of the Syrian refugees strengthens the access to protection from gender-based violence for at least 700 000 Syrians, both inside and outside the country.

But beyond prevention, we know that war crimes and crimes against humanity happen today, and that we have a duty to address their consequences. And justice is the only effective and sustainable response to such violence. Because impunity generates more hatred, it often leads to revenge and to more suffering. So, justice is for us the only way towards reconciliation and sustainable peace.

To achieve this goal, we are bringing into play a combination of different elements – criminal justice, reparations, truth-seeking and institutional reforms. So, I will just mention a few cases where we are currently at work to prevent impunity, and achieve justice.

In Syria, we are working for the International, Impartial and Independent Mechanism to be fully operational as soon as possible and the European Union is mobilising funds to support this Mechanism with up to 1,5 million euros. I know Member States are doing their part; I count on them and also on your support to have an even stronger support from Member States' side.

In Iraq, as new areas are liberated from Da'esh, it is important to assess any war crimes and violation of human rights. And we welcome the commitments made by the Federal Government of Iraq and the Kurdistan Regional Government, to swiftly investigate all allegations about crimes committed by the Iraqi forces.

Beyond Syria and Iraq, last year we led a resolution at the UN Human Rights Council to establish a Commission of Inquiry in Burundi. And we fully support the African Group resolution, tabled in Geneva last month, which created an international investigation mechanism for the Kasai region in the Democratic Republic of Congo.

I welcome very much your acknowledgement of our strong work and support of the International Criminal Court. This is a key element of our strategy. Since 2000, we have committed 37 million euros in direct support of the International Criminal Court. Last Saturday, we marked 15 years since the Rome Statute [of the International Criminal Court] entered into force and for all these 15 years, the European Union has promoted the universal ratification of the Rome Statute.

And last year – as you well remember – we faced a crisis. We have kept close contacts with many African states after the Gambia, South Africa and Burundi notified their withdrawal from the Rome Statute. And today two of these decisions have been revoked. This is an important achievement – achieved also thanks to the work we have done diplomatically – but we know very well that the work is not over yet. We are currently working on how to further improve the promotion of the universal ratification of the Rome Statute.

To finish, let me mention that this is a complex moment for the multilateral system at large, for the United Nations and the UN system in particular, which has come under attack from many corners.

So, let me conclude by saying that there is, there will be, and there cannot be any doubt about the EU's full support to a multilateral global governance, based on international law, on human rights, and on strong international institutions. The European Union will continue to be a strong, reliable and indispensable partner for the UN, and for all who believe that violence must be met with justice, and reconciliation. And our work together with the [European] Parliament will continue in this direction.

Thank you very much.

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