

PRESS RELEASE

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Declaration by the High Representative on behalf of the EU on Human Rights Day, 10 December 2019

We celebrate this year the 10th anniversary of the Charter of the Fundamental Rights and the 30th anniversary of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. Yet these rights continue to be challenged around the world. In particular, children and youth continue to be the main victims of human rights violations. They are forced to seek refuge, recruited as soldiers, forced into child labour or torn apart from their families against their will.

In many places in the world, citizens are mobilising in favour of human rights. Human rights defenders are taking to the streets to demand respect for their rights: civil, political, economic, social and cultural. Young people in particular have been more and more active in standing up for their rights and their future.

In this changing global landscape, the European Union remains the strongest supporter of the multilateral system. It is the pillar of the promotion and protection of human rights. The European Union will reinforce its long-standing commitment, with a focus on new issues such as artificial intelligence or climate change.

The EU reaffirms its strong commitment to the full enjoyment of human rights by all women and girls. The European Union's intensified engagement as a global player has resulted in important achievements at the Human Rights Council and the UN General Assembly in 2019. In particular, the European Union contributed to moving forward on Child Rights and Freedom of Religion or Belief. It created consensus around problematic human rights situations in DPRK, Myanmar and Syria. The European Union has continued to partner with civil society, human rights defenders, academia, private sector and many others to advance on the human rights agenda.

The EU-NGO Forum, which took place in Brussels on 3 and 4 December, with the participation of around 200 civil society activists and human rights defenders, explored the role of the European Union in advancing a fair environmental future and gave recommendations on possible targeted actions. Land and natural resources management is one of the most critical challenges facing the world today. The European Union recognises the importance of the work of human rights defenders often in the face of great adversity and personal cost. The European Union calls on all partners to allow human rights defenders to work in a safe and enabling environment, free from obstruction and insecurity.

The European Union will continue protecting, promoting and fulfilling human rights together with all countries, organisations and individuals engaged in providing effective and innovative responses to existing and new challenges. We have achieved a lot but more needs to be done.

The Candidate Countries Republic of North Macedonia*, Montenegro*, Serbia* and Albania*, the country of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidate Bosnia and Herzegovina, and the EFTA countries Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway, members of the European Economic Area, as well as Ukraine, the Republic of Moldova, Armenia and Georgia align themselves with this declaration.

* - Republic of North Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Albania continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process

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