



Statement on behalf of the EU and its Member States

Under Agenda Item 68 – Human rights

by

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Chair,

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

I am reading here a shortened version of our statement due to time constraints. The full version is available on our website.

In our days, when the scourge of war is becoming a tragic reality of life for more and more people each day, it is more important than ever to reaffirm our commitment to the principles of the Charter of the United Nations.

Human rights are universal, indivisible, interdependent and interrelated. States with different legal systems, traditions, cultures and religious backgrounds must respect, protect and fulfil human rights as set in the UN conventions. As stated by the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action, civil and political rights go together with economic, social and cultural rights. No justification can be used as a pretext for the violation of human rights.

The full realisation of human rights implies a meaningful interaction between governments, civil society and individuals. We are alarmed by the dangers civil society and human rights defenders face around the world and strongly condemn threats, attacks, killings and any form of harassment against them.

In 2022, the situation of human rights in the world has deteriorated. Ukraine, Afghanistan, the Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region and other regions of China, Myanmar, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Northern Ethiopia, Belarus, Syria and Iran are among the places where grave human rights violations are committed.

Chair,

We condemn in the strongest possible terms Russia's unprovoked and unjustified war of aggression against **Ukraine**. This is a gross violation of international law, unprecedented in the 21st century. We firmly reject, do not and will never recognize the illegal annexation by Russia of Ukraine's Donetsk, Luhansk, Zaporizhzhia and Kherson regions, as well the Crimean peninsula. We call on all States and international organisations to unequivocally reject this illegal annexation. We demand that Russia unconditionally withdraws all forces and military equipment from the entire territory of Ukraine and fully respects Ukraine's sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity within its internationally recognised borders. Russia must immediately cease its indiscriminate attacks against civilians and civilian infrastructure, and comply with international law that forbids in particular the use of torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment, arbitrary and extrajudicial executions, enforced disappearances, inhuman treatment of prisoners of war and the use of all forms of sexual and gender-based violence. We strongly condemn the reported forcible transfer of population within the territories under Russian military control and deportations to the Russian Federation. All those responsible for these and other acts that may amount to international crimes will be held accountable for their actions, in accordance with international law.

We are also deeply concerned about the further deteriorating human rights situation in **Russia**.

We welcome the recent report from the UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in **Afghanistan** and call for the respect of human rights and fundamental freedoms of all persons living in the country. We are deeply concerned by the systematic, institutionalised and structural violation of human rights in Afghanistan, including rights of women, girls, journalists and other media workers, human rights defenders, LGBTI persons, persons belonging to ethnic and religious minorities, including the Hazara, and groups and persons associated with the former republic. We reiterate our request to the Taliban to urgently reverse their decision denying Afghan girls equal access to secondary

education and their decision on women's appearance in public. We call on the Taliban to respect international law, and the international conventions to which Afghanistan is a State Party and ensure all necessary measures for the protection of all civilians in Afghanistan. Accountability for all human rights violations and abuses must be ensured.

The EU welcomes the release of the assessment report of human rights concerns in **China's** Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. The report underscores the serious human rights violations occurring in Xinjiang and finds that these may constitute international crimes, in particular crimes against humanity. The EU underscores the need for justice and accountability and urges China to cooperate with the OHCHR on how to implement the report's recommendations, and the need for the opportunity for substantive discussion on the human rights situation in Xinjiang, based on the assessment report. The EU reiterates its persistent and serious concerns about the existence of a large network of political re-education camps, mass arbitrary detentions, widespread surveillance, tracking and control measures, systemic and severe restrictions on the exercise of fundamental freedoms, including freedom of religion or belief, as well as the use of forced labour, torture, forced abortion and sterilisation, birth control and family separation policies, and all forms of sexual and gender-based violence, which have been confirmed by the report.

The EU urges China to abide by its obligations under national and international law to respect, protect and fulfil human rights and fundamental freedoms for all, including Uyghurs and persons belonging to ethnic, religious and linguistic minorities across China, especially in Xinjiang, Tibet and Inner Mongolia. This includes fully respecting the principle of non-refoulement. Furthermore, the EU remains gravely concerned about the repressive use of the National Security Law (NSL) in Hong Kong Special Administrative Region, the renewed use of the Sedition Law, and the sweeping changes in the Special Administrative Region electoral system.

The human rights situation in **Myanmar** is gravely deteriorating day after day since the illegal coup of February 2021, including the situation of the Rohingya minority and other minorities. Serious human rights violations are committed every day by the Myanmar security and armed forces, including arbitrary and extrajudicial executions, torture, all forms of sexual and gender-based violence, the continued persecution of civil society, human rights defenders and journalists. We strongly condemn the politically motivated executions of pro-democracy

activists and opposition leaders in July, marking the first application of capital punishment in Myanmar in more than three decades. We will aim to present together with the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation a resolution on the situation of human rights in Myanmar.

During this session, the EU will present again a resolution on the situation of human rights in the **Democratic People's Republic of Korea**, recalling the dire human rights and humanitarian situation in the country as well as the absence of any tangible progress, and calling upon the DPRK to engage with the UN human rights system, including the newly appointed Special Rapporteur.

We are concerned that hostilities have resumed and fighting has escalated in **Northern Ethiopia** ending a five-months' humanitarian truce. We reiterate our call for all parties to the conflict to immediately end the violence, stop human rights violations and abuses and enter a process of inclusive political dialogue. We reiterate our support for the African Union-led efforts to find a pathway towards a negotiated, durable resolution of this appalling conflict. We call for rapid, full and unfettered humanitarian access to Tigray and all conflict-affected communities. All allegations of human rights violations and abuses, including all forms of sexual and gender based violence as well as violations of international humanitarian law, must be investigated and accountability ensured.

We strongly condemn the human rights violations and continued deterioration of the human rights legal framework in **Belarus**, including recent amendments widening the application of the death penalty. We strongly call on the authorities in Belarus to immediately and unconditionally release and rehabilitate those arbitrarily detained, cease repressions and engage in inclusive dialogue with all elements of the society. We urge Belarus to abolish the death penalty and, as a first step, to introduce a moratorium.

The EU condemns the Lukashenko regime's involvement in Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine, through which it enables the gravest violations of international law including human rights law.

The EU is concerned about the widespread and disproportionate use of force against protestors in **Iran**, following Mahsa Amini's arrest by the morality police and her death in custody. The response of the Iranian security and police forces to demonstrations has resulted in the loss of lives as well as a large number of injuries. The EU and its Member States urge the Iranian authorities to strictly abide by the principles enshrined in the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, to which Iran is a party. Therefore, we expect Iran to immediately stop the violent crackdown on protests and ensure internet access, as well as the

free flow of information. Furthermore, we expect Iran to clarify the number of deaths and arrested, release all non-violent protestors and provide due process to all detainees. Moreover, the killing of Mahsa Amini must be duly and independently investigated and any proved responsible for her death must be held accountable.

The situation in **Syria** remains extremely worrying. We reiterate our call for an end to the violations of human rights and international humanitarian law by all parties, particularly by the Syrian regime and its allies. Lasting peace cannot be achieved without holding perpetrators accountable and rendering justice to the victims. The conditions for safe, dignified and voluntary return of refugees and persons displaced inside the country are not yet in place. We also encourage the continuation and expansion of cross-border aid. The EU reiterates that an inclusive political solution based on the full and comprehensive implementation of UNSCR 2254 is the only route to sustainable peace in Syria.

Mr Chair,

We reaffirm our strong commitment to the promotion and protection of **freedom of religion or belief** for all individuals around the world. Everybody has the right to believe or not to believe, to change religion or belief and to manifest it. We also condemn the criminalization of apostasy and the abuse of blasphemy laws.

The EU remains committed to the promotion, protection and fulfilment of all human rights and to the full and effective implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action and the Programme of Action of the ICPD and the outcomes of their review conferences and remains committed to sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR), in this context. Having that in mind, the EU also reaffirms its commitment to the promotion, protection and fulfilment of the right of every individual to have full control over, and decide freely and responsibly on matters related to their sexuality and sexual and reproductive health, free from discrimination, coercion and violence. The EU will further stress the need for universal access to quality and affordable comprehensive sexual and reproductive health information, education, including comprehensive sexuality education, and health care services.

To conclude, let me underline that the work of the Third Committee reflects new priorities in order to respond to the challenges of today, importantly, the extreme global impacts of **climate change**. Following the adoption of the General Assembly resolution on the human right to a clean, healthy and sustainable

environment in July, we welcome the opportunity of a first interactive dialogue with the new Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of human rights in the context of climate change.

I thank you.