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**Interactive Dialogue with UN High Commissioner for Human Rights**

**EU intervention**

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Madam President,

I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union and its Member States.

We wish to thank you and the Bureau for your leadership in steering the work of the Council.

We are also thankful to you Madam High Commissioner and your Office for your extraordinary commitment to those left furthest behind. Your work is more relevant than ever in the face of existing challenges and in order to Build Back Better. We stand fully behind the independence of your mandate and reiterate that your work mandated by this Council should be fully financed from the UN regular budget.

I wish to highlight some of the recent developments of concern to us.

We remain deeply concerned about the deteriorating situation of human rights in the **Russian Federation**. Systematic crackdown on fundamental freedoms, political opposition, human rights defenders, independent civil society and media continues unabated. The reinforced restrictive legislation curtails political pluralism in Russia ahead of the State Duma elections in September, and beyond. Attempts to silence critical and opposition voices continue, such as the prosecution and politically motivated sentencing of the Russian opposition politician Alexei Navalny based on a previous judgment that the European Court of Human Rights declared arbitrary and manifestly unreasonable, and the effective ban of the activities of his anti-corruption organisation. The EU urges Russia to respect the right to freedom of expression, association, peaceful assembly, religion or belief and the rights of persons belonging to minorities and in vulnerable situations as well as to ensure the protection of civil society, independent media and academic freedom.

The EU fully supports the work of the OHCHR regarding human rights in **Belarus**. We are deeply concerned about the continuing deterioration of the situation, the massive repression and human rights violations, including the systematic use of torture and dire detention conditions, and reported cases of enforced disappearance. The repression has reached a new level, with unacceptable changes in the national legislation, including the designation of the political opposition as “terrorists”. The brutal crackdown of peaceful demonstrators has been followed by systematic repression of civil society, human rights defenders, including those

belonging to national minorities, and of independent media. The forced landing of Ryanair flight in Minsk and the detention by Belarusian authorities of journalist Raman Pratasevich and his partner, followed by their forced “confessions” on state TV, demonstrate that they are in serious risk of torture and other ill-treatment. The EU calls for ensuring that there is no impunity for the perpetrators of human rights violations in Belarus.

The EU calls on **China** to respect human rights, particularly in Xinjiang and in Tibet, and supports the UN independent experts’ call for meaningful access to Xinjiang for independent observers, including for the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights’. We also urge China to act in accordance with its international commitments, including with respect to Hong Kong, where the changes to the electoral system and the continued erosion of fundamental freedoms are of grave concern.

The restoration of inclusive dialogue and democracy is the only way out of the political, economic and social crisis in **Nicaragua**. The Nicaraguan authorities must put an end to the crackdown on political opponents, independent media, civil society and human rights defenders, and guarantee the respect of human rights and civil and political rights in the country. International human rights bodies must be authorised to return to Nicaragua, including the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) and the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR). The EU calls on the Nicaraguan government to abide by its own commitments, Nicaragua’s constitution and by international human rights law. Above all, we call for the urgent release of all political prisoners and for ensuring conditions for a credible, inclusive and transparent electoral process.

The EU remains concerned about the grave human rights violations and abuses committed by both state and non-state actors in **Cameroon** especially in the North-West, South-West and the Far North regions, and calls for accountability for those actions. Civil and political rights continue being subject to limitations.

The EU remains alarmed by the humanitarian situation in Ethiopia that continues to deteriorate since the outbreak of the armed conflict in **Tigray**. We reiterate our calls to end all violence in Tigray, and to allow full, safe and unfettered humanitarian access. We call for the immediate and verifiable withdrawal of Eritrean troops and for all parties to the conflict to protect civilians and cease the numerous human rights violations and abuses, incl. sexual violence. All allegations of such acts must to be thoroughly investigated, perpetrators held accountable, and rule of law restored. We support the joint investigation your office is conducting with the Ethiopian Human Rights Commission and would welcome a discussion of its findings at the Human Rights Council.

The EU remains deeply concerned about the widespread violations of human rights in **Myanmar** since the military coup, that we condemned in the strongest terms. We call for an inclusive dialogue of all relevant stakeholders directed at the restoration of democracy and the rule of law. In this regard the role of ASEAN is key. We continue supporting the efforts made by the Special Envoy of the UN Secretary General. The EU strongly condemns the violence against peaceful protesters and civilians, arbitrary detentions and violations of international law. We reiterate our calls for the immediate end of all acts of violence, the immediate and unconditional release of those detained, the restoration of democratic institution and Government, the swift and faithful implementation of the ASEAN “5 Point Consensus” and for

accountability for human rights violations. The EU also stresses that the rapidly degrading humanitarian situation must be addressed without delay, and unfettered humanitarian access to vulnerable and displaced populations granted.

In **Lebanon**, the EU calls on Lebanese authorities to deliver on their commitment to an impartial, credible, transparent and independent investigation, without further delay, into the cause of the explosion in Beirut on 4 August in order to bring about the accountability demanded by the Lebanese people. The EU is following all developments closely, noting that all human rights, including freedoms of peaceful assembly, opinion and expression must be upheld.

In **Saudi Arabia**, the EU remains concerned about the application of the death penalty, including the increasing number of executions in 2021 after the significant decrease in 2020. The EU expects Saudi Arabia to implement the Royal Decree adopted last year limiting the use of death penalty for juveniles. The EU also calls upon Saudi Arabia to respect the right to a fair trial and investigate any claims of torture or ill-treatment, especially regarding convictions by the Specialised Criminal Court for terrorism. The EU acknowledges progress in Saudi Arabia regarding social and women's rights but is concerned about restrictive measures taken against human rights and women activists.

The EU remains concerned about the continued deterioration of respect for the rule of law and human rights, incl. fundamental freedoms and the independence of the judiciary in **Turkey**. The targeting of political parties, people participating in trade union activities, independent media, human rights defenders, lawyers and judges, as well as other recent decisions represent major setbacks for human rights and run counter to Turkey's obligations to respect democracy, the rule of law and women's rights. Human rights are non-negotiable and they continue to be an integral part of EU-Turkey relations. As an EU candidate country and long-standing member of the Council of Europe, Turkey is expected to apply the highest democratic standards and practices. In this context, we urge Turkey to implement the judgements of the European Court of Human Rights. The EU calls on Turkey to fully uphold women's rights.

I thank you,