



## **A look ahead: The 29th session of the Human Rights Council from a European Union perspective**

Geneva, 15 June 2015

The 29<sup>th</sup> session of the Human Rights Council (HRC29), taking place from 15 June to 3 July 2015 in Geneva, will provide us with an opportunity to address some of the most pressing human rights issues across the world. *"The agenda of HRC29 allows us to discuss a number of topics that have been at the centre of public attention over the past weeks and months, such as migration, Ukraine, South Sudan and Syria. However, the Council is also a platform to focus on human rights violations that do not always make it into the spotlight but that are equally important, e.g. the continuous systematic human rights violations happening in Belarus or the ongoing discrimination and violence against women,"* points out Ambassador Peter Sørensen, Head of the EU Delegation to the UN in Geneva.

The EU looks forward to actively participating in all discussions of the Council, with a special focus on the following country situations and thematic human rights issues:

**Migration:** The increase in irregular migration flows through trafficking and smuggling of human beings, including the terrible sufferings it causes, deserves our utmost attention. The European Union has already regarded migration as high priority for several years; the repeated tragic losses of so many lives in the Mediterranean have led to accelerated work on the EU's new Action Plan on Migration as a global issue: Preventing the loss of lives and human rights' abuses that occur in this context is a huge responsibility we all share, as members of the international community, and not only as Europeans. The EU is committed to address this issue at the Human Rights Council and to hold, in partnership with key stakeholders, an open and inclusive dialogue on the human rights' situation of migrants globally. We look forward to an active engagement in the Interactive Dialogue with the Special Rapporteur on the Human Rights of Migrants, and in a dedicated side-event organized by the Special Rapporteur together with OHCHR. The EU has also requested that an Enhanced Interactive Dialogue on the Human Rights of Migrants takes place during the first week of the Council.

**Belarus:** The EU has been continuously drawing the Council's attention to the systematic violations of human rights in Belarus, including arbitrary detentions, constraining fundamental civil liberties of political opponents, ill-treatment and torture of political prisoners, as well as discriminatory policies towards women, members of national and ethnic minorities, including Roma, and lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex persons. The EU will once again suggest a resolution that will request the renewal of the mandate of the Special Rapporteur.

**Ukraine:** The deteriorating human rights situation, particularly in Eastern Ukraine and Crimea, put a heavy toll on the civilian population. These developments are of grave concern. The latest report of the UN Human Rights Monitoring Mission refers to serious human rights' abuses, intimidation and harassment of the local population by armed groups. The EU continues to closely follow the situation in Ukraine, with the aim of having the Council address the issue appropriately, and to support

implementation of the Minsk agreements with a view to bringing a solution to the crisis that respects Ukraine's territorial integrity, sovereignty and independence as well as international law.

**Syria:** While systematic and widespread violations and abuses of human rights law and international humanitarian law continue unabated, the overall situation inside the country becomes ever more alarming. The EU will once again support a resolution on the continuing grave deterioration of the human rights and humanitarian situation in Syria with a focus on accountability and humanitarian access. We will also advocate for a resolution to address violence based on religious or ethnic affiliation, and the role of women in peace and security.

**South Sudan:** More than a year after the outbreak of violence in the country, the extent and impact of the conflict have become devastating, marked by gross human rights' violations and abuses, and worsening the already serious humanitarian crisis. The EU will work with partners to secure the necessary attention from the international community to these violations and to advocate for the establishment of a monitoring mandate.

**Burundi:** The European Union is closely monitoring the deteriorating situation in Burundi and urges the Burundi authorities to act in accordance with their international commitments when it comes to the protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms. We will therefore also make sure that the worrying situation in Burundi is addressed at this Council session.

**Women's Rights and Gender:** Progress on women's rights means progress on human rights. This year we have a special opportunity to place gender equality, human rights and the empowerment of women and girls top of the international agenda: 2015 marks the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary since the Beijing Declaration and the 15<sup>th</sup> anniversary since the adoption of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security. In addition, the international community will negotiate later this year the post-2015 Development Goals. We therefore welcome the strong focus of the upcoming HRC session on women's rights and will engage actively in all debates. The EU is also a partner in the high-level panel event on ['The Power of Empowered Women'](#) and co-organiser, jointly with the Permanent Mission of Slovenia, of the photo exhibition entitled ['Violence on Her Skin'](#).

**Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity:** The EU remains strongly committed to advancing human rights for all, without any exception, and to eliminating discrimination on any grounds. Yet, sadly, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex persons are still too often victims of exclusion, hate speech, hate crime, discrimination and other forms of intolerance. We therefore welcome the latest report by OHCHR on "Discrimination and violence against individuals based on their sexual orientation and gender identity". In the upcoming session of the Council, the EU will continue to make the case for the respect of human rights for all individuals, irrespective of sexual orientation and gender identity.

**Terrorism/radicalisation/violent extremism:** The fight against all forms of terrorism/radicalisation and violent extremism remains a top priority for the EU. This underlines the need to intensify our commitment to work together in our common fight against terrorism. During the 29<sup>th</sup> Council session we will urge the Council to continue ensuring that the fight against terrorism is carried out with focus both on measures to protect the security of all citizens, while respecting at the same time human rights and fundamental freedoms.