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Permanent Representation of Spain

**UNITED NATIONS HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL**

**14<sup>th</sup> Session**

**(31 May - 18 June 2010)**

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**Item 2**

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**Statement by**

**H.E. Ambassador Javier GARRIGUES**

**Permanent Representative of Spain  
to the United Nations Office in Geneva**

**on behalf of the European Union**

**Geneva, 31 May 2010**

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**UNITED NATIONS HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL**  
**14th session**  
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**Update by the High Commissioner for Human Rights**

**Statement by the Permanent Representative of Spain**  
**on behalf of the European Union**  
**Geneva, 31 May 2010**

Mr. President,

Madam High Commissioner,

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

The Candidate Countries Turkey, Croatia\* and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia\*<sup>1</sup>, the Countries of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidates Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Serbia, and the EFTA country Iceland, member of the European Economic Area, as well as the Republic of Moldova, Armenia and Georgia align themselves with this declaration.

The European Union wishes to thank you for your update on human rights issues and on situations of particular concern that rightly draws our attention to individual victims of human rights. We should never forget that individuals are the subjects of human rights and therefore the main mission of the Council is to give assistance to the victims of human rights violations.

We again express our appreciation over the independent and proactive manner in which your Office discharges its duties. We wish to thank you and your Office for the presentation of your second report on OHCHR Activities and Results and the very open and transparent manner in which you, Madam High Commissioner, inform us in great detail of the goals of your Office and the methods used to achieve them.

The EU supports the importance given to the fulfilment of the Millennium Development Goals as plausible, applicable and actionable policies to be delivered by 2015. We reiterate the need to fulfil the MDGs following the norms contained in the Millennium Declaration and international human rights instruments, which uphold important principles such as non-discrimination, meaningful participation and accountability.

We recognise that Governments in all parts of the world are primarily responsible for ensuring the full respect of human rights and have an important role to play in countering poverty, discrimination and marginalisation in their societies.

As you mention in your statement, Madam High Commissioner, the struggle against all forms of discrimination has to remain at the forefront of our actions and progress. Discrimination not only prevents the full enjoyment of human rights but also represents a threat to democratic societies and

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<sup>1</sup> \* Croatia and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.

their fundamental values. It remains to be incompatible with the principles and values on which the European Union is founded and, therefore, the fight against all forms of discrimination will continue to be part of the EU struggle for human rights.

In this context, the EU is deeply sensitive to the protection of indigenous peoples, people of African descent, persons belonging to minorities and victims of racial discrimination. We agree on the need for us all to focus our global efforts on the protection of the rights of persons belonging to such minorities and vulnerable groups and who are often forgotten and hidden behind statistics.

The EU echoes your declaration that the grounds for discrimination are many and multifaceted. One of our main priorities relates to human rights violations based on sexual orientation or gender identity and we value your continuing strong commitment hereto. We are fully committed to promote and protect the rights of all, including migrants, in particular in the context of the financial crisis, to uphold their human rights and fight any discrimination or violations.

The EU is also concerned with the persistent accidents of the discrimination against individuals based on religion or belief. We take this opportunity to call upon all states to take all necessary measures to address this problem in such areas as equality before the law, legal guarantees, the right to life, liberty and security, the right to change one's religion or belief, remedies, registration practices, and the protection of religious places, sites, shrines and symbols.

The European Union thanks your Office for the continuous work done in support to the Special Procedures and Treaty Bodies and of the Council itself. We strongly emphasize the importance that Special Procedures perform with independence the responsibilities that have been assigned to them.

In turn, the continued engagement of OHCHR with civil society organisations is essential to promote the realisation of human rights for all.

Madam High Commissioner,

The EU continues to fully support the strengthened country engagement of the OHCHR. You mention many countries in your statement, and you give us all a rightful reminder that no country in the world is without human rights violations. The existence in a country of legal remedies, accountable political leadership, freedom of press and other such fundamental principles of international human rights law make a difference in addressing any violations.

We take note of your comments and concerns regarding the situation of human rights in a number of places in the world, including Thailand, Nigeria, Burundi, Nepal and the Occupied Palestinian Territories. We are sure that your valuable recommendations and the cooperation of your offices on the ground will help these situations. We support your call for investigations into all human rights violations and agree that those found responsible for violations must be held to account.

The EU shares your concerns on the human rights situation in Haiti. We commend the efforts done by your Office to improve the situation in Haiti and we encourage the international community to stay involved in the recovery of the concerned country. We also welcome the role your office has played in Burundi in support of the national consultation process on transitional justice that was carried out in this country.

We appreciate very much the work of your office in Colombia and how you have engaged with the Colombian Government in improving the human rights situation in this country and share your ongoing concerns.

In the context of electoral periods, we encourage all countries that recently have held or are preparing elections to guarantee that freedoms of expression, assembly, association and movement are upheld and human rights defenders are able to operate freely.

The EU also considers of great importance the need to ensure that human rights remain on the agenda of countries where considerable challenges still remain and that attention to human rights issues that not suffer from the reconfiguration of peace operations.

Madam High Commissioner, we commend your good work conducted through your visits to Italy, the Gulf Cooperation Council States, Republic of Korea and Japan. We believe these missions are essential to be informed firsthand on the real human rights situation on the country and to improve relationships between you, your Office and the concerned Governments. We would be grateful for an update on your plans to visit Iran.

Finally, we welcome the opening of a country office in the Republic of Guinea. We commend the commitment of the Government of Guinea to continue working with you. We equally hope for the constructive cooperation of the government of Nepal with regard to the renewal of a comprehensive mandate for the Office of OHCHR in Nepal, which the EU strongly supports.

Madam High Commissioner,

We acknowledge the continuous efforts of your Office to keep this Council well informed and with numerous formal and informal opportunities for dialogue with your Office.

We would like to conclude by reiterating once more our full support of the independence, integrity and impartiality of your Office in compliance with your mandate outlined in resolution 48/141.

Thank you.

