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The Future of the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) - Putting human rights and democracy at the heart of the EU's engagement with the region

Brussels, 24 June 2015

On the occasion of the consultation on the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP), the Human Rights and Democracy Network (HRDN) calls on EU institutions and member states to put human rights and democracy at the centre of the future ENP. Since the last review of the ENP in 2011, the EU has made promising steps in this direction, such as adopting a Strategic Framework on Human Rights and Democracy. The HRDN now calls on the EU to put these commitments into practice, applying a firm and coherent approach to human rights abuses and threats to democracy.

In particular, the HRDN recommends that the EU:

- **Promote human rights, democracy, the rule of law and international justice** “in all areas of the EU's external actions without exception”, as stated in the Human Rights Strategic Framework. To achieve this objective, the EU should incorporate these issues in its dialogues with ENP countries on energy, trade, migration, CSDP and other relevant areas of cooperation.
- **Address issues related to human rights, democracy and the rule of law during high level political meetings and summits.** Lower level forms of engagement such as human rights dialogues should be accompanied by clear benchmarks to assess their impact in a more systematic way.
- **Engage with independent civil society organisations (CSOs) in Brussels and in the region as fully-fledged actors of the ENP.** CSOs and activists should be invited to participate in systematic, timely and well-informed consultation and dialogue processes, as well as in monitoring the implementation of the EU and ENP countries' commitments on human rights and democracy.
- **Develop a strategy for addressing the shrinking space for civil society in ENP partner countries.** The EU should throw its “full weight behind advocates of liberty, democracy, and human rights”, as stated in the Strategic Framework. This means speaking out when peaceful human rights defenders come under attack, and publicly calling for their unconditional release.
- **Work towards greater coherence and consistency in EU external action.** For the EU's engagement with its neighbours to be credible and effective, its actions need to be consistent with existing engagements on human rights, democracy, the rule of law, international justice and fighting impunity.
- **Ensure greater coordination among EU institutions (European Commission, EEAS, EU Special Representatives) and member states** in implementing human rights and democracy support actions in the framework of the ENP. The European Parliament has a key role to play in ensuring transparency and accountability on how human rights commitments are implemented in the neighbourhood.

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The Human Rights and Democracy Network (HRDN) is an informal grouping of NGOs operating at EU level in the broader areas of human rights, democracy and conflict prevention. Participation in the network is open to non-governmental organizations which engage at EU level in the promotion of human rights, democracy and conflict prevention in and outside the EU.

The vision of the HRDN is that human rights and democracy are placed at the heart of the EU's internal and external policy agenda. This vision should manifest itself in a EU that effectively protects human rights at home and is a force for positive change in the world. In pursuit of this vision, the network aims to influence EU and member state human rights policies and the programming of their funding instruments to promote democracy, human rights and sustainable peace.

Human Rights and Democracy Network