



**COUNCIL OF
THE EUROPEAN UNION**



Council conclusions on EU priorities at the UN Human Rights Council

*3149th FOREIGN AFFAIRS Council meeting
Brussels, 27 February 2012*

The Council adopted the following conclusions:

- "1. Ahead of the 19th regular session of the UN Human Rights Council (HRC), the EU reaffirms its strong support to the Human Rights Council and welcomes the progress made in performing its mandate over the last year.
2. The EU appreciates in particular the readiness of the Human Rights Council to address urgent cases of human rights violations which require immediate attention by the international community. In this respect, the EU welcomes and supports the leading role of the Human Rights Council in addressing over the last year developments and human rights concerns in North Africa and the Middle East, in particular Libya, Syria and Iran, but also in the case of Belarus.
3. The EU recognizes the important contribution of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Navanethem Pillay and her Office in monitoring these and other developments, and reaffirms its strong support for her work and that of her staff, while underlining the full independence and integrity of the mandate of the High Commissioner for Human Rights.
4. The EU is determined to continue contributing strongly to the important work of the Human Rights Council, in cooperation with all other stakeholders. The EU welcomes the efforts and initiatives of many countries aimed at making the HRC an efficient and effective body that contributes genuinely to the promotion and protection of human rights around the world. The EU stands ready to engage and cooperate with countries from all regions to work together to this end.

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5. The EU will actively participate in the sessions of the HRC in 2012 through statements and interventions in the debates under the various agenda items, as well as by introducing thematic and country-specific initiatives targeting key human rights concerns and promoting accountability for human rights violations.
6. In light of the continued brutal crackdown on its citizens by the Syrian Government, the human rights situation in Syria must stay high on the HRC agenda and the HRC should preserve a strong, effective capacity to monitor the situation.
7. The EU expects the Human Rights Council to continue to closely follow the different human rights situations in the world. The EU expects the HRC to extend the mandate of the UN Special Rapporteur on Iran in order to maintain international attention on the worrying human rights situation in the country. Elsewhere in the region, of special concern are also the situations of Yemen and Bahrain. The situation in Libya should also remain on the agenda of the HRC.
8. The EU will work closely with Japan in order to secure the extension of the mandate of the Special Rapporteur on the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to address the continued critical human rights situation in the country.
9. The EU will present a resolution on the situation of human rights in Burma/Myanmar, which will fully reflect the important recent developments in the country and also recognize that serious human rights concerns, particularly in ethnic areas, remain. The resolution will seek to encourage further reforms and seek the extension of the mandate of the UN Special Rapporteur to this end.
10. The EU will support efforts aimed at keeping the issue of accountability in Sri Lanka on the agenda of the HRC. The EU will encourage the Government of Sri Lanka to fully implement the recommendations of the Lessons Learnt and Reconciliation Commission as a first step.
11. Regarding thematic issues, in the light of recent attacks on members of religious minorities and as a follow-up to the Conclusions of the Council on this issue of February 2011, the EU will present a resolution on freedom of religion or belief. Together with Latin American and Caribbean countries, the EU will promote an omnibus resolution on the rights of the child with a specific focus on children and administration of justice. The EU will also work with others, in particular South Africa, to ensure an appropriate follow-up to the landmark resolution adopted last year on discriminatory laws and practices and acts of violence against individuals based on their sexual orientation and gender identity, and to deliver an adequate response to the High Commissioner's study on the matter. The EU will also support efforts for the promotion and protection of the right of persons with disabilities.
12. The EU underlines the need for the Human Rights Council to maintain its focus on freedom of association and assembly, as well as freedom of expression, including on the internet, and to provide concrete support to human rights activists and civil society organizations whose role is essential for the strengthening of democracy.

13. In preparation of the next meeting of the Working Group of the Human Rights Council on private military and security companies, the Council stresses the importance of effective regulation to prevent or remedy human rights violations which have a connection to the activities of private military and security companies. In this context, the Council endorses the initiative of the High Representative to express the EU's support for the Montreux Document on "*pertinent international legal obligations and good practices for States related to operations of private military and security companies during armed conflict*", as a contribution to the stronger international regulation and control of the activities of private military and security companies.
14. The EU continues to attach great importance to Special Procedures; their access to countries and the free and unhindered contact and cooperation with individuals and civil society are indispensable. The EU also reaffirms the importance of the work of Human Rights Treaty Bodies and therefore welcomes the consultation process initiated by the High Commissioner on how to make them more effective.
15. The EU renews its interest in discussing with partner countries ways and means to implement relevant recommendations stemming from the Universal Periodic Review, as well as recommendations formulated by Treaty Bodies and Special Procedures, including through technical assistance.
16. The Council stresses the importance of raising the priorities for HRC in meetings and contacts with third countries at all levels, with a view to seek their support, as well as to listen to their views and ideas."
