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On 21 October 2013, the Council adopted the EU Annual Report on Human Rights and Democracy in the World in 2012 (Country Reports), as attached to this note.

EU Annual Report on Human Rights and Democracy in the World in 2012

Country reports

Table of contents

Country and regional issues 7

I Candidate countries and potential candidates 7
- Albania 8
- Bosnia and Herzegovina 8
- Croatia 9
- Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia 9
- Iceland 10
- Kosovo 10
- Montenegro 10
- Serbia 11
- Turkey 11

II EEA/EFTA countries 12
- Iceland 12
- Norway 12
- Switzerland 13

III European Neighbourhood Policy 14
- Eastern Partnership 14
- Armenia 15
- Azerbaijan 17
- Georgia 20
- Belarus 23
- Republic of Moldova 26
- Ukraine 29
- The Southern Mediterranean 32
- Egypt 35
- Israel 39

Palestine 42
Jordan 45
Lebanon 47
Syria 49
Tunisia 52
Algeria 54
Morocco 56
Western Sahara 59
Libya 61

IV Russia and Central Asia 64
Russia 64
Central Asia (regional) 67
Kazakhstan 70
Kyrgyz Republic 72
Tajikistan 74
Turkmenistan 75
Uzbekistan 77

V Africa 79
African Union 79
Angola 80
Benin 82
Botswana 83
Burkina Faso 84
Burundi 86
Cameroon 87
Cape Verde 89
Central African Republic 91
Chad 92
Comoros 94
Congo (Brazzaville) 94
Cote d'Ivoire 96
Democratic Republic of Congo 98
Djibouti 101
Equatorial Guinea 101

Eritrea 102
Ethiopia 103
Gabon 104
Gambia 105
Ghana 107
Guinea 109
Guinea-Bissau 110
Kenya 112
Lesotho 114
Liberia 115
Madagascar 116
Malawi 117
Mali 120
Mauritania 122
Mauritius 124
Mozambique 125
Namibia 127
Niger 129
Nigeria 130
Rwanda 134
Sao Tomé and Príncipe 136
Senegal 137
Seychelles 139
Sierra Leone 140
Somalia 142
South Africa 144
South Sudan 146
Sudan 148
Swaziland 151
Tanzania 152
Togo 154
Uganda 155
Zambia 157
Zimbabwe 158

VI The Middle East and the Arabian Peninsula 160
Bahrain 160
Iran 163
Iraq 165
Kuwait 167
Oman 169
Qatar 169
Saudi Arabia 170
United Arab Emirates 171
Yemen 173

VII Asia 174
Afghanistan 174
Bangladesh 176
Bhutan 178
Brunei 179
Myanmar/Burma 181
Cambodia 182
China 184
Taiwan 188
India 190
Indonesia 194
Japan 196
Korea (Republic of) 198
DPRK 200
Laos 201
Malaysia 202
Maldives 204
Mongolia 206
Nepal 207
Pakistan 209
Philippines 213
Singapore 214
Sri Lanka 215
Thailand 216
Timor Leste 218
Vietnam 220

VIII Oceania 221
Australia 221
Fiji 222
Small Pacific Island States – Kiribati, Republic of Marshall Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, Nauru, Palau, Tonga, Tuvalu 224
New Zealand 225
Papua New Guinea 225
Samoa 226
Solomon Islands 227
Vanuatu 229

IX The Americas 230
Canada 230
USA 230
Latin America and the Caribbean 232
Argentina 232
Belize 233
Bolivia 234
Brazil 235
Chile 238
Colombia 239
Costa Rica 241
Ecuador 241
El Salvador 242
Guatemala 244
Guyana 245
Honduras 246
Mexico 248
Nicaragua 250
Panama 251
Paraguay 251
Peru 253
Suriname 254
Uruguay 255
Venezuela 256

X The Caribbean 258
Antigua and Barbuda 258
Bahamas 259
Barbados 260
Cuba 261
Dominica 263
Dominican Republic 264
Grenada 265
Haiti 266
Jamaica 268
St Kitts and Nevis 269
St Lucia 270
St Vincent and the Grenadines 271
Trinidad and Tobago 272

Annex I – Table of abbreviations 273

Country and regional issues

I Candidate countries and potential candidates

Stability of institutions guaranteeing democracy, the rule of law, human rights and respect for, and protection of, minorities are key elements of the Copenhagen criteria for EU accession and as such are intensively covered by the enlargement process. In these areas, the candidate countries and potential candidates broadly have the necessary legal framework in place, although some gaps remain, for example as regards the scope of anti-discrimination legislation. Difficulties concerning implementation of laws persist in many cases. National human rights institutions often require significant strengthening, as does the law enforcement bodies' handling of issues such as hate crimes and gender based violence. General societal attitudes to vulnerable groups such as ethnic minorities, people with disabilities and lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender persons remain a common problem.

In view of the relevance for EU accession, the Commission's annual Enlargement package contains detailed assessments of the situation of human rights and democracy in candidate countries and potential candidates. The situation is also reflected in the Council conclusions on enlargement[1]. In view of this wealth of existing information, this report makes reference to the respective documents for 2012 Additional information on IPA and EIDHR activities is provided where relevant.
In 2012, financial assistance at the national level was complemented by regional programmes where there was an added value and an identified need to engage regionally. A focus was placed on supporting the marginalized and most vulnerable groups.

[1] http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_data/docs/pressdata/EN/genaff/134234.pdf

Albania

http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/pdf/key_documents/2012/package/al_rapport_2012_en.pdf
In July 2012, the EU launched a €1.5 million project (under the IPA 2011 programme) to support the social inclusion of Albania's Roma and Egyptian communities. In 2012, the EU provided financial support to 10 projects implemented by civil society organisations under EIDHR at a total value of almost €1.2 million. The main areas on which support was focused were protection of minorities, access to justice, child rights, gender equality and women's empowerment.

Bosnia and Herzegovina

http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/pdf/key_documents/2012/package/ba_rapport_2012_en.pdf
Assistance under IPA focused on social protection and inclusion of children (€1.4 million), sustainable return (€0.5 million) and support to the implementation of the action plans under the Roma Strategy (€0.5 million). Ongoing projects under EIDHR in 2012 were mainly contracted in 2009 for an overall amount of €1.1 million. Priorities include civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights. EIDHR grant contracts awarded during 2012 addressed the fight against discrimination against women, the Protection of Children, improving access to the right to work of people with disabilities and others. A €485.000 project "the Youth Peace Advocates in Eastern Bosnia and Herzegovina" was completed in June 2012.

Croatia

http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/pdf/key_documents/2012/package/hr_rapport_2012_en.pdf
In 2012, eight IPA projects valued at €2.6 million were implemented, focusing on fighting sexual exploitation and abuse of children, as well as protection of children in homes for children and improving foster care. Under the Civil Society Facility, three projects with a total value of €7.7 million focused on the strengthening of civil society organisations. During the reporting period, some 25 EIDHR projects with a total value of €2.3 million were under implementation (out of which 10 projects started in December 2012) allowing particularly vulnerable groups to organise in self-help groups, to train NGO volunteers, staff, local authorities and media as well as to monitor institutional/legislative reform requirements and to raise public awareness.

Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia

http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/pdf/key_documents/2012/package/mk_rapport_2012_en.pdf
In 2012, IPA projects focused on supporting the Office of the Ombudsman, the Directorate for Personal Data Protection, the implementation of the Roma strategy and strengthening juvenile justice reform (€3.1 million total projects value). Under the Civil Society Facility, 14 projects were finalised (€0.7 million) targeting gender policy, equal treatment of people with disabilities, interethnic relations and strengthening civil society organisations to reduce trafficking in human beings. EIDHR (€0.6 million) assisted, for example, EU best practices in enforcement of anti-discrimination legislation shared among relevant institutions and civil society, multicultural education, gender equity mainstreaming in rural communities, enhancing social inclusion in the field of housing for marginalised groups (mainly the Roma community) and the rights of ethnic communities smaller than 20%.

Iceland

http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/pdf/key_documents/2012/package/is_rapport_2012_en.pdf
Iceland has continued to ensure a high standard of protection of fundamental rights, including economic and social rights. No EU assistance has been provided in this area.

Kosovo[2]

http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/pdf/key_documents/2012/package/ks_analytical_2012_en.pdf
Under the IPA 2010 programme, the EU funded a project in 2012 worth €1 million which aimed at strengthening the human rights regulatory and institutional framework and looked into the capacity building of the Ombudsperson institution and local civil society. During 2012, the EU provided financial assistance worth almost €0.9 million to five projects implemented by civil society organisations in Kosovo under EIDHR. The issues dealt with by the projects cover women empowerment, LGBTI rights, measures against domestic violence and help for people with disabilities, including assistance for blind people.

Montenegro

http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/pdf/key_documents/2012/package/mn_rapport_2012_en.pdf
There are three on-going IPA projects on children's rights, gender issues and sustainable solutions for internally displaced Roma population worth a total of €6.2 million. In 2012, the EU provided financial support to four projects under EIDHR at a cost of €0.6 million. These include promoting respect for protection from torture, inhuman and degrading treatment; strengthening women's participation in decision-making processes at local level; raising awareness of human rights and monitoring the implementation of human rights policies.

[2] This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSCR 1244/99 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence.

Serbia

http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/pdf/key_documents/2012/package/sr_rapport_2012_en.pdf

In 2012, the EU implemented under IPA three projects on vulnerable children and other vulnerable groups, as well as anti-discrimination policies worth a total of €10.25 million; three further projects supported refugees, IDPs and returnees at a cost of €7.12 million. Financial support under the Civil Society Facility programme included 19 projects at a total value of €1.8 million focusing on strengthening the rule of law and capacity building measures to civil society organizations at the national and local level. The EU also provided financial support to 20 projects implemented by civil society organizations under EIDHR valued at €1 million, focusing mainly on protection of minorities, children's rights, gender equality and women's empowerment, as well as rights of people with disabilities.

Turkey

http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/pdf/key_documents/2012/package/tr_rapport_2012_en.pdf

The Pre-accession instrument (IPA) supports capacity-building projects in the area of human rights and freedoms, judiciary/justice, gender, security and other aspects related to the implementation of political criteria. During the reporting period, some 15 projects were under implementation, also in the area of freedom of expression. The EIDHR supports projects with a focus on strengthening civil society in its action in a broad area of human rights, such as human rights defenders, LGBTI rights, women rights (including women's political participation and violence against women), refugees and asylum seekers, minorities, freedom of religion and cultural rights.

II EEA/EFTA countries

Iceland

(see candidate countries and potential candidates).

Norway

As the EU and Norway share similar human rights standards, the EU's human rights strategy is focused primarily on cooperating and maintaining a close dialogue with Norway on human rights matters in international organisations (UN, Council of Europe, OSCE etc.) and in specific countries across the world. A human rights teleconference took place on 15 October between Brussels and Oslo, preceding UNGA 67.

In Norway, human rights are included in the EU's public diplomacy and information activities to stress the EU's leading role worldwide.

Switzerland

In 2012 Switzerland was subject to Universal Periodic Review (UPR). In this process, 140 recommendations were addressed to Switzerland, of which Switzerland accepted 50 and refused 4 immediately. The remaining 86 recommendations will be examined by Switzerland and a final response will be provided no later than March 2013. The recommendations which Switzerland refused concerned the ratification of the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Their Families, the enacting of legislation to prohibit organisations which promote or incite racism, the guaranteeing of judicial remedies for violations of social, economic and cultural rights, and the removal of the ban on the construction of minarets. The other recommendations broadly focused on the topics of gender equality, police-related abuse, migration (including human trafficking) and asylum, and domestic violence. The coordination between the federal, cantonal and municipal authorities is one of the main challenges for the follow-up to the UPR recommendations, as the competencies to implement changes are distributed across these three levels.

Having similar views and values, Switzerland and the EU have close cooperation in different international fora (UN, Council of Europe, OSCE etc.) and in specific countries across the world. Human right consultations take place on a regular basis.

III European Neighbourhood Policy

Eastern Partnership

Eastern Partnership

During 2012 the EU stepped up its dialogue and cooperation in the field of human rights with all countries of the Eastern Partnership (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Republic of Moldova and Ukraine) both bilaterally and multilaterally. The basis of the Easter Partnership as defined by the last Summit in Warsaw in 2011 of common values and principles of liberty, democracy, respect for human rights, fundamental freedoms and the rule of law was further developed.

The multilateral dimension of the Eastern Partnership supports the approximation of partner countries to EU norms and standards. The Partnership reached out beyond governments so as to involve civil society as well as other key actors, including national Parliaments, the business community, regional and local authorities, thereby ensuring that democracy and human rights issues remain high on the Eastern Partnership agenda.

The Platform 1 of the multilateral track of the Eastern Partnership aims at promoting democratic principles, good governance and stability by improving key sectors of governance. The activities in these areas were supported by the Council of Europe (CoE) under a CoE Facility to cover work on electoral standards, judicial reform, good governance, the fight against corruption and cooperation against cybercrime.

Furthermore, the EU supported the Polish-French project on "Cooperation between Ombudsmen" (2009-2013) which should help to enhance ombudsmen institutions in the countries of the Eastern Partnership. In 2012 two events within this project were held on discrimination and promotion of equality especially in the areas of child right's protection, Ombudsman activities, the judiciary as well as on the labour rights of elderly persons and persons with disabilities.

Armenia

http://ec.europa.eu/world/enp/docs/2012_enp_pack/progress_report_armenia_en.pdf
The European Union publicly addressed the need for the Armenian authorities to address a number of recommendations in the area of democratic governance and human rights in the Foreign Affairs Council conclusions on South Caucasus of 27 February.

As assessed by OSCE/ODIHR, parliamentary elections of 6 May marked progress, but several shortcomings needed to be addressed ahead of February 2013 presidential elections. The EU shared this assessment in the statement of High Representative / Vice President Ashton and Commissioner Füle of 8 May, while continuing to support technical and professional capacities of the Armenian authorities in the electoral framework. The European Parliament in its resolution of 18 April on the negotiations of Association Agreement between EU and Armenia underlined the importance of key issues related to human rights, including good conduct of elections. The EU continued to encourage the Armenian authorities to take further steps to move on from the events of 1 and 2 March 2008 following the presidential elections. The Armenian authorities have yet to fully investigate the deaths that occurred during the clashes of March 2008, and the allegations of ill-treatment in police custody and violations of due process.

In its annual review of the progress made by partner countries in the context of the European Neighbourhood Policy, the EU has implemented the principle of offering "more for more" to those partners who make the most progress in their internal reforms, based on mutual accountability and shared commitment to the universal values of human rights, democracy and the rule of law. On this basis, the European Commission awarded an additional €15m to Armenia in 2012. These additional funds were focused on two priorities: to support justice sector reform and vocational training.

The EU continued to encourage the Armenian authorities to improve the situation regarding freedom of expression and the media, and more specifically as regards TV broadcast law and disproportionate compensations in suits for insult and defamation.

As regards freedom of religion and belief, the EU called on the Armenian authorities to ensure a genuine alternative to military service, as recommended by the Council of Europe's Venice Commission.

In the framework of the EU's anti-discrimination policy, a local EU statement was issued in May after the firebombing of a LGBTI-friendly pub in Yerevan and the subsequent disruption of the Diversity March.

The fourth meeting of the EU-Armenia human rights dialogue took place in Brussels in December 2012.

The EU continued to provide support to strengthening the institution of the Human Rights Defender's Office (HRDO), which continues to play a major role in monitoring the situation on human rights and fundamental freedoms in Armenia.

In addition, the EU Advisory Group to the Republic of Armenia continued to provide support to Armenia's reform efforts, including those in the area of human rights and good governance.

Respect for human rights is at the basis of the EU-Armenia Mobility Partnership which addresses all aspects of migration and mobility, including the eradication of trafficking in human beings and the integration and protection of refugees.

Azerbaijan

http://ec.europa.eu/world/enp/docs/2012_enp_pack/progress_report_azerbaijan_en.pdf
The EU actively raised the issue of human rights and democracy on the occasion of a number of high level visits (including European Council President van Rompuy, European Commission Vice-President Kroes, Commissioner Füle) as well as working level visits and meetings. The matter was intensively discussed during the EU-Azerbaijan Subcommitte for Justice, Liberty, Security and Human Rights and Democracyon 19/20 November held in Baku. Beyond that the most important issues were also raised during the Cooperation Committee and Council meetings that took place on 22 November and 17 December 2012 in Brussels as well as in direct high level contacts between the EU Delegation in Baku and the Azerbaijani government.

In its annual review of the progress made by the partner countries in the context of the European Neighbourhood Policy, the EU expressed concern regarding the lack of freedom of assembly, association and expression, notably regarding civil society organisations.

In the run up to the Eurovision song contest the EU was on the forefront of criticism directed at the Azerbaijan's policy of preventing protests in the context of the event and the *Sing for Democracy* platform launched by a number of local human rights activists. Respect for property rights and implementation of court decisions in a number of property-related cases were in the focus of the EU-Azerbaijan dialogue.

In 2012, the EU/EU Delegation issued five statements pertaining to the human rights situation in the country. On 26 June 2012, HR/VP welcomed the release of the remaining imprisoned participants to the peaceful rally held on 2 April 2011.

The EU continued to encourage the Azerbaijani authorities to improve the situation regarding freedom of expression and the media, the investigation of cases of pressure against journalists and to properly address issues such as defamation or fair distribution of independent newspapers. Concerns relating to possible side effects of the amendments to the Criminal Code and the Code of Administrative Violations concerning freedom of assembly adopted by the Parliament on 2 November 2012, particularly in the run-up to the 2013 presidential elections were formally raised in the regular dialogue between the EU and Azerbaijan.

The EU Delegation actively followed up on the cases of imprisoned human rights defenders, meeting or trying to meet several of them in prison (Shahin Hasanli, Vidadi Isganderov), visiting their families (Hilal Mammadov), following trials and observing public protest actions. Several meetings with civil society and opposition groups were held, notably at EU Delegation premises (at times with participation of EU Member States), and the EU actively supported numerous civil society organized events (by speeches or offering the venue) thus increasing their visibility and providing a better image of these organizations/activists. It also organised a meeting of civil society organizations with the authorities in order to reduce misunderstandings about the role of civil society organizations in a modern society and to encourage a dialogue between them on specific issues (NGO registration, freedom of assembly, freedom of media and Internet). Structured dialogue between the authorities and civil society, with an increased role of the Azerbaijan National Platform of Civil Society Forum under the Eastern Partnership was strongly encouraged by the EU Delegation and met with interest by the relevant state bodies.

The first visit of the EU HoMS to Nakhchivan Autonomous Republic (NAR) was initiated by the EU Delegation in February 2012 and meetings with local authorities (including the NAR Ombudswoman) and local HR defenders were organized in this framework. Following the positive experience of the 2011 meetings with the local Human Rights Defenders, organized upon initiative of the EU Delegation in Ganja and in Baku, a new meeting took place in 2012, in Quba.

The EU spent roughly altogether EUR 1.5 Mio on human rights and democracy related project activities – EIDHR&NSA (exact amount cannot be given due to the fact that many project activities are multiannual).

The EU Delegation actively engaged with the Ombudsman's Office in particular requesting clarifications on the situation and respect of rights of prisoners or those with alleged crimes of a political background. As a follow-up to the EU-Azerbaijan Subcommittee for Justice, Liberty, Security and Human Rights and Democracy, the Ombudsman's Office applied for TAIEX financial support to organize jointly with the EU a workshop on increasing of efficiency of right to a fair trial and execution of court decisions.

Georgia

http://ec.europa.eu/world/enp/docs/2012_enp_pack/progress_report_georgia_en.pdf
In a year of change for Georgia, the EU and Georgia continued to intensify their relationship. Negotiations on an EU-Georgia Association Agreement made further good progress, and negotiations for a Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area (DCFTA) also progressed well.

The fifth EU-Georgia human rights dialogue was held in Tbilisi in June 2012. The dialogue was held in a friendly, open and constructive atmosphere, with an exchange on a wide range of issues of mutual interest and concern, as well as discussions on possibilities for concrete cooperation in the field of human rights. The talks focused on the challenges facing the criminal justice system and the law enforcement system in Georgia, on elections and the electoral framework, on freedom of expression and information, on freedom of assembly and association, on protection of minorities and internally displaced persons, and on the human rights situation in Georgian regions of Abkhazia and the Tskhinvali/South Ossetia.

In a dialogue with Georgia the EU stressed also the need for Georgia to align its legislation, in particular the Labour Code, and practice with the ILO conventions No. 87 and 98 on freedom of association and the right to collective bargaining.

In 2012, the EU continued to provide support for the Public Defender's Office (PDO) under its "Comprehensive Institution Building" Programme. The PDO as an independent body continued to monitor human rights violations and issue concrete recommendations to the Georgian authorities, notably drawing attention to the ill-treatment of prisoners by Georgian law enforcement agencies. The EU Head of Delegation issued a statement welcoming the appointment of a new Public Defender in December 2012.

The issue of prisoner abuses became a dominant theme of the parliamentary elections in October 2012, which resulted in a change of government. EU Ambassadors in Tbilisi issued a statement on 20 September 2012 on the issue of prisoner abuse; HR/VP Ashton also issued a statement in this regard on 20 September. The issue of prison reform had been raised by the EU on previous occasions, including at the annual Human Rights Dialogue and at meetings of the EU-Georgia Cooperation Council. It was also raised by the European Parliament in its resolution on Georgia of 17 November 2012.

In the months leading to the election, a number of key political reforms were implemented, including a new Election Code adopted in January 2012, and legal amendments introduced in March and in June to address voter participation, party financing, and access to media. The implementation of some of these amendments drew criticism, including from the PDO, for selectivity and disproportionality. The EU's Foreign Affairs Council adopted conclusions in March 2012 calling on Georgia to ensure that the elections met internationally recognised democratic standards, and President of the European Council Herman van Rompuy hailed Georgia's progress in reforms in a statement made in July 2012. In June 2012 the EU, with a contribution from the UNDP, launched a new initiative to promote credible and sustainable electoral institutions in Georgia. On 3 September 2012, HR/VP Ashton and Commissioner Füle issued a further statement to the press calling on all sides to conduct the parliamentary elections in a peaceful, enabling and competitive environment.

The peaceful changeover in government, following an election which was judged by the international community to have met international democratic standards, represented a significant achievement for Georgian democracy. The result of the election was judged by an international election monitoring mission, including a delegation from the European Parliament, to have accurately represented the will of the Georgian people, though there were some concerns over the conduct of the election campaign. The conduct of the election, and the handling of the outcome and transition, was welcomed by the EU Foreign Affairs Council in October 2012, by the European Parliament in a resolution of 17 November 2012, in a statement made by HRVP Ashton and Commissioner Fule on 2 October 2012, and during a succession of meetings between senior EU figures – including European Council President Van Rompuy, European Commission President Barroso, European Parliament President Schulz, HRVP Ashton, and Commissioner Füle – and the Georgian Prime Minister and President, as well as other Georgian government ministers, taking place both in Brussels and in Georgia.

Since the new government took office, prosecutions have been launched against certain officials in the previous government accused of having abused their powers. Here, too, there have been counter-accusations of selectivity and disproportionality. These issues have been raised by senior EU figures, including European Council President Van Rompuy, European Commission President Barroso, European Parliament President Schulz, HR/VP Ashton, and Commissioner Füle, during the visits to Brussels of the Georgian Prime Minister and President in November 2012. HR/VP Ashton also raised them in the context of her visit to Georgia in November 2012. They were discussed at the EU-Georgia Cooperation Council meeting which took place on 18 December 2012.

The EU and Georgia continue to implement the Mobility Partnership which addresses all aspects of migration and mobility, including the eradication of trafficking in human beings and the integration and protection of refugees. In June 2012, the EU-Georgia visa dialogue was opened, examining the conditions for visa-free travel of Georgian citizens to the EU, including human rights standards.

In its annual review of the progress made by partner countries in the context of the European Neighbourhood Policy, the EU has implemented the principle of offering "more for more" to those partners who make the most progress in their internal reforms, based on mutual accountability and shared commitment to the universal values of human rights, democracy and the rule of law. On this basis, the European Commission awarded an additional €22m to Georgia in 2012. These additional funds were focused on two priorities: to reinforce an existing programme supporting criminal justice reform, including specifically prison reform; and a new programme to enhance border and migration management.

Belarus

In 2012, the situation as regards respect of human rights, the rule of law and democratic principles in Belarus remained of concern and the EU, continuing its policy of critical engagement with the Belarusian government, pressed for changes to the better.

Considering the general human rights situation, the Foreign Affairs Council of 23 January 2012 broadened the criteria for restrictive measures. The Council further strengthened these measures on 28 February and 23 March, leading to a total of 243 individuals being placed on a visa ban and assets freeze list, imposing an embargo on arms and materials that could be used for internal repression, adopting a restrictive approach to EIB[3]/EBRD lending and freezing of the assets of 32 companies. Following these measures, the Belarusian side recalled its Ambassadors to the EU and to Poland for consultations and asked for reciprocity from the EU and Polish side. This unilateral move led in turn to the departure of all EU ambassadors for a period of almost two months.

Belarus remains the only country in Europe that still applies capital punishment. In February the EU repeatedly called on the authorities of Belarus not to carry out the executions of alleged metro bombers Dzmitry Kanavalaw and Uladzislaw Kavalyow and the EP adopted a resolution condemning these death sentences. HR/VP Ashton on 17 March strongly condemned their execution, noting that the two men were not accorded due process. The EU called on Belarus to introduce a moratorium on the death penalty in view of its eventual abolition.

Throughout 2012 the EU called for the immediate release and rehabilitation of all remaining political prisoners and for Belarus to respect its international obligations regarding the prohibition of torture and cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment. On 14 and 15 April two prominent political prisoners - former Presidential candidate Andrei Sannikaw and his campaign aide Dzmitry Bandarenka - were released, after being pressured to write a plea for pardon to the Belarusian President. A third political prisoner, Syarhei Kavalenka, was released on 26 September on the same condition. Demonstrating EU support, Commissioner Füle and the European Parliament met with the relatives of political prisoners.

[3] EIB does not lend in Belarus although Belarus is "potentially" eligible under the EIB's External Lending Mandate. Earlier Council Conclusions (June 2011) indicated that EIB should only proceed "if and when the EU is able to give a sufficiently positive assessment of the human rights and rule of law situation."

Numerous appeals were launched by the EU to Belarus, urging the authorities to stop all harassment of members of the opposition, human rights defenders, journalists and civil society, and not to hinder their freedom of movement. EU institutions demonstrated their support to human rights defenders and civil society by meeting their representatives at various occasions throughout the year. This also allowed the EU to obtain first-hand information on the local situation. In a statement of 28 June, the spokesperson of HR/VP Ashton expressed her deep concern about harassment of and further repressive measures against representatives of civil society, the opposition and independent media, and called on the authorities of Belarus to reverse the relevant policies and practices. The Council and the European Parliament also condemned the suppression of non-violent protests and the systematic use of the judicial system as a means of repression, including against peaceful protesters.

Aiming at strengthening its substantial dialogue with the civil society, Commissioner Füle launched a European Dialogue on Modernisation with Belarusian society on 29 March in Brussels, to discuss about possible reforms for the modernisation of Belarus, on the related potential development of relations with the EU, as well as possible EU support in this regard.

On 5 July, the 20th session of the UN Human rights Council adopted resolution 20/13 presented by the EU, which expressed grave concern about the serious violations of human rights and restrictions on fundamental freedoms, urged Belarus to release the political prisoners, and appointed a Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Belarus. Belarus has so far decided not to recognise the mandate of the Special Rapporteur established by the resolution and not to cooperate with him.

In a joint statement on 24 September, HR Ashton and Commissioner Füle regretted that the Belarus Parliamentary elections of 23 September took place amidst an atmosphere of control and pressure against alternative political thought, and represented another missed opportunity for Belarus to hold elections in line with OSCE and international standards.

The Foreign Affairs Council on 15 October called again on the Belarusian authorities to release and rehabilitate the political prisoners, to stop the harassment of civil society, the political opposition and the independent media, to comply with the Human Rights Council Resolution 20/13, and, against this negative background, decided to roll over the existing restrictive measures for another year without changes.

EU assistance to Belarus is still limited in scope and focuses on directly and indirectly supporting the needs of the population and democratisation. The support to Civil Society has increased sixfold since the start of 2011, reaching €12,7 m in 2012. This includes projects aiming at guaranteeing freedom of thought, conscience and religion in Belarus, improving women and child protection and rights, supporting initiatives of various civic groups, increasing capacity of trade unions, social inclusion and empowerment of disadvantaged people, and integrating former prisoners in the society.

Republic of Moldova

http://ec.europa.eu/world/enp/docs/2012_enp_pack/progress_report_moldova_en.pdf
The EU engaged in human rights discussions with the Republic of Moldova in a number of formats such as the formal human rights dialogue, the ad hoc expert meeting including the UN, OSCE and the Council of Europe, the Visa Dialogue and high level visits.

The reform of the judiciary, implementation of the UN Universal Periodic Review (UPR) recommendations, fight against discrimination and the freedom of media were amongst the EU's main human rights objectives in 2012.

Ambitious reforms started in the justice and the law-enforcement sectors, including fight against corruption and were supported by the EU assistance. The National Action Plan to implement the justice sector reform strategy 2011-2016 was adopted in February 2012. In line with the EU Eastern Neighbourhood Policy's principle of "more for more", the EU committed €70 million to support this fundamental reform, out of which €8 million were committed specifically for human rights related aspects. This represents an increase of €28 million in funding to the Republic of Moldova in 2012 under the Eastern Partnership Integration and Cooperation programme (EaPIC), based on progress in reforms.

In March 2012, the Republic of Moldova accepted most of the remaining 17 UPR recommendations (out of 122) and revised its National Human Rights Action Plan of 2011 accordingly. The EU Delegation participated actively in the Moldovan UPR task force.

Access to justice continued to improve. References to the new law on freedom of expression appeared in case law, setting encouraging precedents. In May 2012, an anti-discrimination law ("law on ensuring equality") was adopted, creating precedent in the region. The Moldovan government gave the EU assurances that the law was comprehensive and in particular addressed discrimination against LGBTI persons, as required by Moldova's international obligations.

The right of LGBTI persons to freedom of assembly and other fundamental rights remained an issue despite increasing commitment of the Government to protect the rights of LGBTI persons. For example, the May 2012 Gay Pride conference in Chisinau could be peacefully conducted. Nevertheless, the resilience of homophobic sentiments in some parts of Moldovan society remained a concern. Homophobic decisions by local authorities in Bălti and some other municipalities, prohibiting the "aggressive propaganda of non-traditional sexual orientations" raised similar concerns and were addressed by the EU in the framework of the OSCE as well as during the bilateral dialogue with the Republic of Moldova. The government took steps to have these decisions revoked, repealed, or overturned through due legal processes, which in some cases are still going on.

In April 2012, the Audiovisual Coordination Council (ACC) withdrew the broadcasting license of the opposition television channel NIT for failure to comply with the principle of pluralism. The appeal of the NIT channel was postponed several times and was still pending in the Chisinau Court of Appeal by the end of 2012. The EU raised concerns over the process leading to the withdrawal of the licence by the ACC and the lengthy proceedings in the Court of Appeal. The EU issued a local statement on the withdrawal of the license and observed several court hearings in that case. The EU raised the issue at all levels of its bilateral dialogue with the Republic of Moldova.

EU continued to pay attention to the human rights situation in the Transnistrian region and to encourage the de facto authorities to show commitment to the promotion of democratic reforms and the respect of human rights, including as part of the work on the recently established working group on human rights.

The EU and Moldova continue to implement the Mobility Partnership which addresses all aspects of migration and mobility, including the eradication of trafficking in human beings and the integration and protection of refugees. In June 2010, an EU-Moldova visa dialogue was opened, examining the conditions for visa-free travel of Moldovan citizens to the EU, including human rights standards. The second phase of the visa dialogue was launched on 19 November 2012 and focuses, amongst others, on Moldova's effective implementation of international protection procedures and of an comprehensive THB strategy in line with EU standards.

Ukraine

http://ec.europa.eu/world/enp/docs/2012_enp_pack/progress_report_ukraine_en.pdf
Throughout 2012, the EU followed very closely the human rights situation in Ukraine. Numerous interventions were delivered in which the EU expressed concern as regards the respect of human rights, the rule of law, independence of judiciary and right to a fair trial and overall democratic principles. These included EU statements, demarches, declarations as well as other public reactions through interviews, including at highest level.

Human rights issues were addressed in dialogues held at all levels, including the Cooperation Council in May 2012, the Justice, Freedom and Security (JLS) Subcommittee in June 2012 which dedicated a full day session to human rights aspects as well as the Cooperation Committee in October 2012.

In the framework of the human rights session within the JLS Subcommittee in June 2012, the EU reaffirmed the importance it attaches to the cooperation with Ukraine in regularly exchanging information on individual cases of concern. The EU handed-over a list of individual cases of concern related to politically motivated trials and cases of selective justice, ill-treatment by law enforcement bodies, violence against civil society and journalists and on Freedom of Assembly. Ukraine's reply is pending.

The EU at repeated occasions expressed concern that several high ranking former officials and leading opposition figures, including former Prime Minister Tymoshenko, former Minister of Interior Lutsenko or former Acting Defence Minister Ivashenko were subjected to the selective application of justice, characterized by non-transparent and flawed judicial processes. The European Parliament's mission headed by former Presidents Cox and Kwasniewski, which was established in May 2012, supported significantly the EU's efforts to monitor the cases of selective justice and ensure adequate medical treatment.

On various occasions, the EU expressed its concerns related to the systematic problems in the judicial system, notably in the criminal justice sector, underlining the importance of the independence of the judiciary.

In the context of the October 2012 Parliamentary elections, the EU expressed its concern about balanced access to the media of electoral candidates and cases of intimidation of journalists. On several occasions, the EU reiterated its regret that the consequences of trials which did not respect international standards as regards free, fair and transparent legal processes prevented opposition representatives from standing in the Parliamentary elections. The EU noted with concern that the conduct of the 28 October parliamentary elections presented a mixed picture with several shortcomings and constituted deterioration in several areas compared to standards previously achieved.

In the support of the active civil society in Ukraine, the EU welcomed the new law on civic organizations which was passed in 2012 and entered into force in January 2013.

Through the mechanism of the Action Plan on Visa Liberalisation, new legislation on anti-discrimination has been adopted and an action plan on anti-discrimination policy has been prepared. Ukraine has committed to continue the work in view of improving the legislation in this area according to EU *acquis* and the recommendations of the international organizations.

Trafficking in human beings is an issue of particular concern. In this regards, the EU has included Ukraine in the list of priority countries for cooperation in this field. Regular assessment of the progress made in this area is carried out in the framework of the implementation of the Visa Liberalization Action Plan and the annual assessment of the implementation of the EU-Ukraine Action Plan in the framework of the ENP.

The EU and Ukraine also held exchanges in the framework of the preparation of Ukraine's new Roma Strategy to deal with the issues faced by this community.

The EU made several public statements in support of the right to freedom of assembly and freedom of expression by all Ukrainians, including LGBTI community. Other issues related to discrimination were actively discussed in different forms of bilateral dialogue.

The EU also expressed concerns that an individual from the Russian Federation recognised as a refugee under international law was extradited from Ukraine on 15 August. In this context the EU called upon Ukraine to respect commitments relating to adoption of asylum legislation in line with international and EU standards. The EU called on Ukraine to ensure thorough investigation and clarify facts on the disappearance in Kyiv of Russian opposition activist Leonid Razvozhaev.

Overall, the EU was active in supporting human rights defenders. Contacts with human rights NGOs at working level took place periodically. In 2012 the EU supported five projects worth over €1 million allowing human rights defenders to expand their work in fighting against torture and discrimination and ensuring access to justice for vulnerable groups in Ukraine.

The EU furthermore supported human rights organisations in Ukraine through the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights with an annual budget of 1.2 million euro. In 2012 the EU awarded 10 new projects to work throughout Ukraine on election monitoring and voter rights, human rights education campaigns for youth, fight against ill-treatment and torture, respect for LGBTI rights, legal assistance and strategic human rights litigation.

In its annual review of the progress made by the partner countries in the context of the European Neighbourhood Policy, and the area of labour rights, the EU noted the absence of progress regarding the adoption of the long awaited amended Labour Code.

In 2012 the joint EU-Council of Europe regional program on Reinforcing the Fight against Ill-treatment and Impunity continued to work in Ukraine on strengthening the national capacities for combating ill-treatment by law enforcement and penitentiary institutions and supporting the development of the complaints system in line with international standards.

The Southern Mediterranean

More than two years since the dawn of the "Arab Spring", starting with the popular uprisings in Tunisia and Egypt, the situation in the Arab world remains highly fluid. Yet important differences have emerged among and between the countries. While overall significant progress has been made in promoting democratic reforms (e.g. holding of elections in line with democratic standards, strengthening the role of civil society, increased freedom of expression and assembly) difficulties and setbacks were also observed, and many obstacles still need to be overcome in order for these transitions to be successfully consolidated.

The EU has engaged with the new governments that were democratically elected and extended its support on the basis that our relationship will need to take account not only of their official programmes and policies but crucially of their emerging record while in government. In keeping with its revised Neighbourhood Policy, EU engagement with all its neighbour countries continues to be based on incentives (the "more-for-more" principle) as well as mutual accountability.

The conflict in Syria called for a different EU response. The EU was faced with a situation following the violent reaction by the Assad-regime to peaceful demonstrations in the town of Deraa that escalated from a human rights crisis to an ever more bloody conflict and a humanitarian crisis. The potential of this conflict to spill-over into Syria's neighbouring countries and, indeed, to destabilise the whole region is a major concern to the EU and the international community. Since the start of the conflict the EU has worked on several fronts in its efforts to bring it to an end. Efforts included political and diplomatic pressure on the Assad-regime, suspension of all financial and technical assistance, tough economic and political sanctions against the regime and its economic supporters, as well as diplomatic support to the Joint Special Representative of the UN and the League of Arab States, and efforts aimed at persuading the various opposition groups to unite. In addition, the EU is providing a large amount of humanitarian assistance to the people of Syria and the neighbouring countries who host Syrian refugees.

At the same time the EU has renewed its engagement with regional organisations. In 2012, the EU has assumed the Northern co-presidency of the Union for the Mediterranean that was established in 2008 with the underlying commitment to strengthen democracy and political pluralism by expanding participation in political life and embracing all human rights and fundamental freedoms. Today, while continuing the political dialogue among its 43 member States, the Union for the Mediterranean focuses on the promotion of projects in priority areas of mutual interest. In doing so important human rights aspects are being taken into account. For example, three projects are being initiated with the aim to empower women economically. They seek to promote women entrepreneurship, and enhance young women's skills.

In the wake of the Libya crisis the EU's intensified its cooperation with the League of Arab States (LAS). A milestone was a meeting of Foreign Ministers of EU and Arab League member States, held in Cairo on 13 November 2012. At that meeting, co-chaired by the HR/VP, the ministers held a political dialogue on a wide range of issues of common interest and agreed a joint declaration. As reflected in the joint declaration, the Ministers, inter-alia, underlined their commitment to the promotion and protection of human rights, including the right to economic and social development, freedom of expression and the freedom of religion or belief and condemned all forms of incitement to hatred and intolerance, in accordance with international legislation on human rights. The Ministers emphasised the need to ensure gender equality and full respect of human rights for all people. The Ministers condemned any advocacy of religious hatred in accordance with Human Rights Council resolution 16/18. In addition to their political dialogue, the Ministers endorsed a joint work programme on concrete cooperation in various fields, including human rights and women's empowerment. On human rights, a dialogue and exchange of know-how on implementation of international Human Rights Standards is envisaged in cooperation between the Arab Regional Mechanism for Human Rights, the LAS Human Rights Department and the EU Special Representative for Human Rights as well as the EEAS. On women's empowerment, cooperation aiming at the promotion of women's participation in the political and economic sphere is envisaged between the LAS Women Department, Arab Women Organizations, the European Commission (DEVCO), the EEAS and UN Women.

Egypt

http://ec.europa.eu/world/enp/docs/2012_enp_pack/progress_report_egypt_en.pdf

During 2012, Egypt continued its process of transition from military to civilian rule. The EU strongly supported this process while repeatedly stressing the elements that in its view were fundamental for a successful democratic transition. The High Representative reiterated in various contexts, notably in public statements, the need to promptly complete the transfer of power to civilian rule and emphasized the fundamental importance of inclusiveness and respect for fundamental rights in crafting a new constitution. During the first anniversary of the Egyptian revolution on 25 February 2012, the High Representative issued a statement reiterating the EU's support for the continuation of Egypt's democratic transition, allowing for a transfer to civilian rule as early as possible'.

The EU's political support for the Egyptian transition was also demonstrated by a series of high-level visits. The HR/VP visited Cairo in July, President Morsi visited Brussels on 13 September and the HR/VP co-chaired the EU-Egypt Task Force on 13-14 November in Cairo. During this high level meeting Human rights were always present as a joint priority in our bilateral relations.

The EU welcomed the lift of state of emergency in May 2012. However, the EU, through Foreign Affairs' Council conclusions on 25 June 2012, voiced concern about the decree issued on 13 June granting the military broad powers of arrest and detention of civilians for a wide range of offenses, which allows prosecutions initiated under the state of emergency and tried before state of emergency courts to continue after the lifting. Instances of illegal detention and alleged torture of protesters in front of the presidential palace on 5 December, which led to death of demonstrators were also cause of concern.

The EU believes it is necessary to improve the working conditions for civil society organisations in Egypt, the work of which continue to be hindered by the current NGO law. The High representative issued a statement on February 2012 calling for the Egyptian authorities to “respect freedom of association and to adopt a law on Associations and Foundations which will be consistent with international standards." An EU (HoMS) dialogue with local Human Rights Defenders was held in December 2012. The continuous dialogue between the EU and Egyptian civil society has been matched by an unprecedented financial assistance worth EUR 35 Million provided by the EU to Civil Society Organisations since the January 2011 uprising.

In relation to freedom of assembly and freedom of association, the EU also considers that further attention needs to be paid to workers' and trade unions' rights.

On 13 November 2012, the High Representative issued a statement calling on Egypt to ensure the full respect of human rights for all, not least women, who played such a key role in the events of spring 2011. The Rights of Egyptian Women have been severely challenged in the process of political transition. The new constitution adopted in December 2012 obligates the state to provide equal opportunities, however the previous provisions on gender equality were not kept in the new text. Egypt still lacks a legal environment to protect girls and women from violence. The EU is currently supporting 12 on-going actions, worth EUR 3.2 million, with civil society organizations upholding and defending women's rights. These projects cover a wide range of issues such as promoting women's involvement in public life, monitoring women's participation in elections, facilitating women's access to micro-credits, supporting women victims of violence, or strengthening women's participation at the local level. On 19 July, the EU Delegation organised a women’s seminar chaired by HR/VP on ‘Egyptian Women – the Way Forward’ during which a €4 million contract in support of UN Women’s action to provide Egyptian women with ID cards was signed.

The EU has paid close attention to Freedom of Expression as a key element for democracy. Despite some greater freedom of expression since ex-President Mubarak stepped down, a spike in defamation cases has been documented under President Morsi, including prosecutions against critics of the President and of the ruling party, arrests and prosecutions under the blasphemy law that predates the new administration. As an example, EU action included the financing under EIDHR of a programme implemented by Reporters Sans Frontières to protect journalists and bloggers, providing them with administrative, material or financial support when needed to help them continue working, including, in the most extreme cases, their move to a safe location.

The EU wishes to promote and protect freedom of religion or belief everywhere and for everyone. The Foreign Affairs Council in its Conclusions of 27 February 2012 on Egypt emphasized the importance to ensure the protection of fundamental freedoms and to investigate violations, including against religious communities. The European Parliament resolutions on Egypt of 16 February 2012, recalled the European Union's commitment to freedom of thought, conscience and religion and stressing that governments have a duty to guarantee these freedoms all over the world

Although Egypt has signed the Geneva Convention on refugees of 1951, the Convention was signed with important reservations and the country has no legislation or administration or administrative provisions in the area of asylum. During 2012, reports from civil society organizations criticized the situation for refugees and migrants in Egypt in particular those transiting in the Sinai region In its resolution of 15 March 2012 on human trafficking in Sinai, the European Parliament urged the Egyptian authorities to take all necessary measures to stop acts of torture, extortion and human trafficking of Eritrean refugees and other refugees in the country, and to prosecute those who violate the refugees' human rights and practice any form of slavery. The EU continued working during 2012 in the regional protection Programme aimed at offering better reception and treatment conditions to refugees arriving in Egypt. The EU funded a EUR 2 million project by IOM in the area of migrant's rights, and one grant focusing on migrant children.

A new constitution was approved by referendum amidst deep political controversy in December, including in relation to the apparent power struggle between the Presidency and elements of the Judiciary, following controversial Judiciary rulings and a Constitutional Declaration issued by President Morsi on 22 November, immunizing his decrees, the Constituent Assembly (from which seculars and churches had walked out) and the Shura Council from judicial scrutiny. The constitution enshrines some provisions that have triggered concern in the human rights community, including a prohibition of insulting other human beings, prophets or messengers; limiting freedom of religious practice and building places of worship to the three Abrahamic religions; a role for the state (and the police) in protecting public morality and in ensuring that women can combine "their duties towards their families" with work in the public sector; or the possibility for military courts to continue trying civilians in cases of harm to the armed forces.

On 13-14 November 2012, the first EU-Egypt Task Force was organized as a concrete example of strengthened cooperation between the Egypt and the EU. The Task Force was co-chaired by HR/VP and Egyt FM Kamel Amr. Joint EU-Egypt co-chair conclusions were issued referring to ’a new era in EU-Egypt relations’ contributing ‘to a closer partnership based on based the promotion of peace, stability and prosperity and the overarching values of respect for social justice, socio-economic development, rule of law, human rights and good governance.’

Israel

http://ec.europa.eu/world/enp/docs/2012_enp_pack/progress_report_israel_en.pdf

The EU conducts a regular dialogue with Israel on human rights issues, both within the State of Israel and in Palestine. Israel is unusual among the countries of the European neighbourhood in having been a democratic state since its founding. Nevertheless, in the context of the EU's desire to fully implement a partnership for democracy and shared prosperity in its Southern neighbourhood, enhancing the values of democracy and the importance of a vibrant civil society, respect for human rights and for the rights of persons belonging to minorities are central to the EU-Israel partnership. Given Israel's democratic tradition coupled with the continuing stalemate in the Middle East peace process, many of the human rights issues on which the EU engages with Israel are linked to on-going occupation of Palestine. These are largely covered in the section of the report dealing with Palestine and include pertaining to its responsibilities under IHL and applicable IHRL. These include conflict-related violence, military detention of children, administrative detention and Israeli restrictions on Palestinian freedom of association.

These issues continue to have an impact on EU-Israel relations, as well. In 2012 the EU confirmed its position not to take forward the upgrade in bilateral relations initially proposed in 2008, but to base any such upgrade on, *inter alia*, respect for human rights, the rule of law and fundamental freedoms and international humanitarian law, and in the context of our common interest in resolution of the Israel-Palestinian conflict through the implementation of the two-state solution. In the far-reaching Foreign Affairs Council Conclusions of 14 May on the MEPP, the EU stated that ending the conflict was a fundamental interest of the EU as well as of the parties themselves. It also recalled the applicability of international humanitarian law in Palestine, including the applicability of the 4th Geneva Convention relative to the protection of civilians. The EU condemns all attacks on civilians, both Palestinians and Israelis. In November the EU strongly condemned the rocket attacks on Israel from the Gaza Strip, stating that Israel had the right to protect its population from these kinds of attacks while acting proportionately and ensuring the protection of civilians at all times. The High Representative also condemned the terrorist attack on a bus in Tel Aviv on 21 November.

A particular concern of the EU throughout the year was the continued construction of Israeli settlements in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, which impact negatively the human rights situation in Palestine. Numerous statements were issued throughout the year on this issue culminating in the conclusions of the December Foreign Affairs Council in which the EU stated it would monitor closely the situation and its broader implications and act accordingly. During the course of the year the EU also condemned continuous violence and deliberate provocations by settlers against Palestinian civilians by civilians (settler violence) as well as Israeli security forces. While welcoming the initiation of legal proceedings in some instances, it called on Israel to bring the perpetrators of these acts to justice in all cases.

The EU and Israel normally hold an annual dialogue on human rights issues in Israel and the EU within the framework of an informal working group. Unfortunately the 2012 meeting of the group was delayed until January 2013. The EU stands by its view that the informal working group on human rights should be transformed into a full subcommittee on human rights and democratic governance in the framework of the EU-Israel Association Agreement. Human rights issues related both to Israel and the Israeli occupation of Palestine are also addressed within the framework of the EU-Israel sub-committee on political dialogue as well as the Association Committee and Association Council, all of which met during the year. The EU also enjoys fruitful cooperation with Israel as regards the fight against xenophobia, discrimination and anti-Semitism, including through annual joint seminars such as that organised in June 2012. This year's event included specific sessions on combatting hate speech as well as access to justice to ensure effective redress against racist discrimination. Israel continued to provide strong guarantees of the rights of women and children as well as the LGBTI community.

In its dialogue with Israel during the year the EU encouraged Israel to increase efforts to address the economic and social situation of the Arab minority, while recognising the complexity of the situation and the efforts required from both the government and the Arab minority leadership. The European Parliament resolution of 5 July 2012 on EU policy on the West Bank and East Jerusalem, as well as addressing issues related to the West Bank, called for the protection of Bedouin communities in the Israeli Negev and for the withdrawal by the government of the so-called Prawer Plan which suggested solutions to the problems faced by the Bedouin and unrecognised communities. The EU encouraged Israel to seek equitable solutions with regard to unrecognised Bedouin villages in close consultation with the communities concerned.

The EU remained concerned with some measures taken by Israel to combat illegal migration as these risked restricting the possibility of migrants from Eritrea or Sudan in particular receiving international protection or humanitarian assistance in Israel. In this context the EU offered to share experience and provide assistance if requested in developing a comprehensive immigration policy. In the ENP Action Plan Israel and the EU have agreed to engage in a regular dialogue on civil society issues and to promote links between European and Israeli civil society organizations and NGOs. The EU continued to call on Israel to promote its active NGO sector and refrain from actions which may complicate the space in which civil society organisations operate. It noted in the 2013 ENP progress report that previous trends which risked restricting this space appeared to be subsiding.

Palestine

http://ec.europa.eu/world/enp/docs/2012_enp_pack/progress_report_opt_en.pdf

The human rights situation in and consequently the EU's human rights strategy for Palestine cannot be seen separately from the wider political context of (i) the ongoing Israeli occupation and (ii) the internal division between Fatah and Hamas. This was acknowledged also by the European Parliament resolution of 5 July 2012 on EU policy on the West Bank and East Jerusalem. During 2012 the EU continued to encourage both Israel and the Palestinians to return to the negotiating table. Regrettably such negotiations were not resumed. In the Foreign Affairs Council conclusions of May and December 2012 the EU reaffirmed its commitment to the two-state solution while expressing grave concern about developments on the ground, which threaten to make this impossible to attain.

In November 2012, a major escalation of violence between Israel and armed groups in Gaza took place, leading to the death of around 158 Palestinians and six Israelis. The High Representative was active in pursuit of a ceasefire as a stepping stone to a longer lasting solution to Gaza's isolation. In its conclusions on Gaza of 19 November 2012, the Foreign Affairs Council also called for an urgent ceasefire, deeply regretting the loss of civilian life on both sides.

The PA, however, remains responsible for upholding human rights in the areas where it is able to exercise control. The ongoing internal Palestinian political split between Gaza and the West Bank constitutes a considerable obstacle for the EU to address and promote human rights across Palestine.

A fundamental objective of the EU is to maintain sustained dialogue with the Palestinian Authority (PA) on human rights issues and ensure that both Palestinian state-building and intra-Palestinian reconciliation fully address human rights issues. The EU has considerable scope to take this objective forward given the significant programme of financial assistance dedicated to the PA, as well as the deployment of the CSDP mission in support of the Palestinian civil police, EUPOL COPPS. The rule of law continued to be a focal sector for EU development assistance to the PA in 2012, while the EUPOL COPPS mission also includes human rights training as part of its wider rule of law activities. Through these the EU has continued to provide support for the development of an independent, impartial and fully functioning judiciary and more accountable PA security services. The EU has also continued to provide support for non-partisan human rights organizations and human rights defenders, notably in 2012 through ensuring an EU presence at selected court hearings, in line with the criteria set out in a locally adopted strategy on human rights defenders.

The EU and the Palestinian Authority (PA) hold an annual dialogue on human rights issues within the framework of the European Neighbourhood Policy. The fourth EU-PA subcommittee on Human Rights, Good Governance and the Rule of Law was held in Brussels on 8 May 2012. Topics discussed included prisoners' affairs and detention conditions in PA facilities, freedoms of association, assembly, press and religion, the practice of security clearance for PA employees, the penal code, women's rights, children's rights, rights of the disabled, measures to combat incitement as well as wider governance and rule of law issues. In line with its previous commendable practice, the Palestinian Independent Commission for Human Rights (ICHR) formed part of the Palestinian delegation.

In 2012, more than a thousand Palestinian prisoners embarked on a hunger strike in protest of the use of administrative detention by Israel. The EU has consistently expressed concern about Israel's excessive recourse to administrative detention, and made this clear in numerous forums throughout the year, including at the EU-Israel Association Council in July and in the Human Rights Council. The High Representative, as she made clear in her comments to the press after the May Foreign Affairs Council, urged a solution to the large-scale hunger strike by Palestinian prisoners. Her spokesperson also made statements about a number of specific cases of hunger-striking administrative detainees at other points in the year, including Khader Adnan in February and Samer al-Barq and Hassan Safadi in September. The conditions of detention in Palestinian jails in both the West Bank and the Gaza Strip continued to be a matter of concern for the EU with allegations of ill-treatment and torture. In a local statement on 8 May 2012, the EU called for the full respect of international human rights obligations towards all prisoners.

The EU also followed closely the situation as regards freedom of expression in the oPt. It expressed its concern about arrests of journalists in the Foreign Affairs Council conclusions of 14 May and, having pressed the Palestinian Authority on the issue of the banning of certain websites, welcomed in the same conclusions the decision of President Abbas to reverse this. The EU also remains particularly concerned about the right to freedom of association, both in the Gaza Strip given the continued closure of organisations by the de facto authorities, and in the West Bank where reports of rejected registration of NGOs continued. Freedom of association for Palestinians is also affected by Israeli policy in East Jerusalem. The EU called in May for Palestinian institutions there to be allowed to reopen and, following the renewal of their closure orders on 30 July, again called on Israel to reverse this. In a local statement the EU welcomed the first exercise in Palestinian democracy since 2006 (local elections in certain West bank districts on 20 October). The EU continues to call for the holding of presidential and legislative elections.

Concerning the death penalty, in a number of local statements, the EU condemned death sentences issued and carried out in the Gaza Strip by the *de facto* authorities, including the execution of three people on 17 July 2012. In the statement issued to the EP plenary on her behalf on 21 November the High Representative also deplored the summary executions of seven Palestinians in the Gaza Strip by armed groups there. The EU continued to commend the de facto moratorium on the death penalty in the West Bank while calling for a de jure moratorium.

Jordan

http://ec.europa.eu/world/enp/docs/2012_enp_pack/progress_report_jordan_en.pdf

Dialogue between the EU and Jordan on human rights continued with the holding of the seventh meeting of the "Human Rights, Governance and Democracy" in May 2012 in Amman, against the background of a reform process going on in the country and the Syria crisis. A wide spectrum of matters were addressed including the reform of the electoral framework, freedom of association, of the media, freedom of expression, freedom of religion or belief, women's rights, eradication of torture, etc.

Similarly to other countries in the region, Jordan also witnessed in 2012 demonstrations calling for political and economic reforms. Four key political reforms-related laws were adopted by the Parliament in spring 2012: a new electoral law, a new political parties' law and the laws establishing an independent Electoral Commission and the Constitutional Court. It is noteworthy that the adoption of the first three laws is in line with the priorities included in the joint EU-Jordan ENP Action Plan negotiated in 2010.

The electoral law has been strongly criticized by most opposition parties as it does not ensure a fair distribution of seats and a just representation of the highly populated urban areas versus over-represented countryside's districts. An Independent Electoral Commission was established in May and Jordan agreed to the deployment of a fully-fledged EU electoral observation mission for the legislative elections of 23 January 2013. The EU statement adopted on the occasion of the EU-Jordan Association Council held in December stated that the EU considers that the electoral law should be an essential part of an inclusive and continuous process whose objective should be improved representation, governance and democratic accountability.

The EU supports Jordan's on-going reform process, both politically and financially. A concrete indicator of this support is the additional funding made available through the SPRING (Support for Partnership, Reform and Inclusive Growth) programme, which includes inter alia institutional support to the new independent electoral commission (IEC), civic awareness campaigns, etc.

In September, the Parliament adopted some controversial amendments to the Press and Publication Law which empowers a government agency (Press and Publications Directorate) to define a website as an "electronic publication", forcing it to register which implies new liabilities for websites owners. The above mentioned EU statement also called on Jordan to maintain full respect for freedom of expression, one of the key priorities of the joint ENP Action Plan, including on media and Internet. The EU recalled that the new regulatory framework should not undermine the ultimate objective of guaranteeing this fundamental freedom.

Jordan continued to apply a *de facto* moratorium on the application of the death penalty since May 2006. Following the 2011 constitutional amendment outlawing torture, the EU invited Jordan to sign the Optional Protocol to the Convention against torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, to establish efficient preventive national mechanism, inspection system allowing unannounced visits, and to systematically publish data on torture.

The spread of corruption in the Jordanian society remained a matter of serious concern.

With regard to labour standards, Jordan made no progress towards ratifying ILO Convention No 87 'Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise'.

In March, the UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women recommended, inter alia, that Jordan withdraw its reservations from article 15(4) of CEDAW and revises its Nationality Law.

Lebanon

http://ec.europa.eu/world/enp/docs/2012_enp_pack/progress_report_lebanon_en.pdf

Throughout the year 2012 **Lebanon** continued to suffer from repercussions of the crisis in neighbouring Syria. The growing number of refugees crossing into the Lebanese territory, The fragile security situation and sporadic outbreaks of violence posed substantial challenges to Lebanon's internal stability. The end of the year was marked by paralysis of the national institutions after the assassination of a high level security official in October 2012. Inspite of these circumstances, cooperation between the EU and Lebanon developed intensively with important progress made in the ENP dialogue, negotiation of the new ENP Action Plan and programming of EU financial assistance for the years 2014-2016.

Election reform features as a priority objective of new EU-Lebanon ENP Action Plan agreed in 2012. The EU continued to actively promote in the framework of the Association Council, Association Committee and political dialogues held in 2012 a timely progress of electoral reform ahead of the 2013 parliamentary elections, in line with the recommendations of the election observation missions of 2009 and 2005. The EU called for instance for the creation of an independent election commission and the use of pre-printed ballots. The Cabinet adopted a draft electoral law in August 2012 and submitted it to the Parliament. However multi-party talks on the new electoral framework started only in January 2013 with significant differences among political leaders. The EU supports the efforts to reform the electoral framework in Lebanon, working with civil society, the Lebanese authorities and the UN-lead Election Donor Forum. In the past years, electoral reform was supported in the context of projects worth €14 million.

Reform of the justice sector became the first priority of the new ENP Action Plan prepared during 2012. The EU continued to actively advocate improvement of the situation concerning impunity, including efficiency and independence of the justice system as well as the importance of improvement of the situation in prisons, reduction in the use of arbitrary detention, the practice of torture and the recourse to the military tribunals when trying civilian cases. The EU engaged in a public debate on abolition of the capital punishment on the World Day against Death Penalty. The Lebanese honoured their international commitments with regard to the Special Tribunal for Lebanon and its financing. Moreover, the mandate of the Tribunal was extended for an additional three years in January 2012.

Although Lebanon is not a party to the 1951 Geneva Convention on the Status of Refugees and continues to oppose signature of the Memorandum of Understanding with UNHCR, which would fill the protection gap, Lebanon nevertheless extended assistance to the large number of refugees fleeing violence in Syria. Their numbers increased dramatically at the end of 2012, reaching more then 180 000. By the end of 2012 the Government adopted a response plan on assisting the refugees, actively encouraged by the EU, and the EU mobilised €44.8 million in support of the Syrian refugees in Lebanon, including humanitarian aid, educational services and reinforcement of emergency capacities of Lebanese authorities.

The EU continued to support improvement of living conditions of the Palestinian refugees in Lebanon through financial assistance (€20 million in 2012 for refugee camps infrastructure, education and employment) and political dialogue. The unchanged situation of the migrant domestic workers and their mistreatment was publicly condemned in a local EU statement issued in March 2012.

Freedom of expression remains an important item of EU's agenda in Lebanon, with active collaboration with the civil society and human right defenders, following up on reported cases of intimidation and annual organisation of the Samir Kassir Award for Freedom of Press.

Syria

The human rights crisis in Syria has further worsened in 2012 as the country moved into a situation of a protracted conflict. Throughout the year, there have been numerous reports in the media as well as by observers, including from the UN, concerning increasing serious and large-scale violations of human rights. Such violations include arbitrary killings, torture, arbitrary arrests, and various forms of persecution. The Independent Commission of Inquiry established by a resolution of the UN Human Rights Council in August 2011, during a special session on Syria requested by the EU, repeatedly stated that gross violations of human rights in Syria amount to crimes against humanity. Both the number of civilian casualties and the number of arbitrary detained persons amount to tens of thousands.

The EU has consistently expressed its gravest concerns at the deterioration of the situation in Syria and in particular by the widespread and systematic violations of human rights, international humanitarian law and fundamental freedoms by the Syrian authorities. In line with the UN Human Rights Council resolution on Syria adopted on 28 September, the EU has called upon all parties to put an end to all forms of violence and to take special measures to protect vulnerable groups such as children, as well as women and girls subject to gender-based violence (GBV).

The EU has taken a number of measures in response to the regime's repression against the Syrian people and further atrocities perpetrated by both sides of the conflict. Bilateral cooperation with the Syrian authorities continued to be suspended since 2011 and a broad sanction policy targeting the regime instituted. By the end of 2012 and since May 2011 the EU adopted 20 rounds of restrictive measures and listed 180 persons and 54 entities. On 30 November 2012, the Council decided to renew all restrictive measures against Syria for three months. The European Parliament adopted on 16 February a resolution on the situation in Syria (P7_TA-PROV(2012)0057), which was followed by another resolution on 11 September (P7_TA-PROV(2012)0351).

The EU was the first donor to the Syrian refugees and those in need within Syria: the total EU humanitarian assistance in response to the Syria crisis reached over €310 million in 2012, this amount included contributions from EU budget and Member States. In particular, funding allocated by the EU humanitarian budget line comprised protection support for children and women (gender-based violence) in accordance with IHL and other applicable international law and is implemented both in Syria and neighbouring countries.

In addition, the EU budget has financed €85 million in assistance from non-humanitarian instruments. In June 2012, a Special Measure benefiting Syria and Syrian refugees was adopted with a value of € 27.6 M aimed at supporting both civil society within Syria and the Syrian refugees who had fled to neighbouring countries. In December 2012, to take into consideration the important increase in the flow of refugees fleeing the country, another Special Measure for Syrian refugees was adopted amounting € 20.8 M. Under the IfS a decision on Regional support programmes for populations affected by crisis in Syria was adopted at the end of 2012 with an amount of €20 M.

The EU has actively engaged in assisting human rights defenders in Syria through the EIDHR instrument and provided aid to the Syrian civil society. This allowed for emergency support to Human Rights defenders, as well as support to documentation of human rights violations, digital security, media, networking of activities and support to Syrian bloggers and independent media.

On the international stage, the EU took a lead in the Human Rights Council and initiated three Special Sessions on Syria, being instrumental in the creation of the Independent Commission of Inquiry. Resolutions on Syria adopted by the UN Human Rights Council and the General Assembly are significant steps stemming from EU initiative. The EU welcomed the extension of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on Syria and its strengthening through the nomination of two new members, Carla del Ponte and Vitit Muntarbhorn in 2012. The EU reaffirmed its support to the Commission's investigations into alleged violations of international human rights law with a view to hold to account those responsible for such violations, including for those that may amount to crimes against humanity and war crimes according to the definition of the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court. The EU has repeatedly stated that, if concerns about war crimes and crimes against humanity are not adequately addressed on a national level, the International Criminal Court should deal with the situation. The UNSC can refer the situation in Syria to the ICC at any time. The EU called on the UNSC in Council Conclusions to urgently address the situation in Syria in all aspects, including this issue.

The EU underlined the importance of documentation of the widespread, systematic and gross human rights violations and recalls that all those responsible must be held accountable. The EU reiterated its call to the Syrian authorities to cooperate fully with the Commission of Inquiry including by granting it full, immediate and unfettered access to the whole Syrian territory. Existing efforts for justice and accountability, whether by the Commission or non-governmental bodies, enjoy full EU support.

The EU has constantly emphasized the need to focus international and regional efforts to solve the Syrian crisis through a political solution and called on key actors in the region and all members of the UN Security Council to uphold their responsibilities and support the efforts of the UN - League of Arab States Joint Special Representative, Lakhdar Brahimi.

On numerous occasions the High Representative condemned the appalling human rights violations in her statements, both generally and with regard to individual cases of persecuted human rights defenders. In all fora and formats the EU underlines the need for an immediate halt to the massive human rights violations by all parties and a resolution of the conflict leading to a peaceful situation where human rights of all Syrian citizens, regardless of their ethnic or religious background, will be respected and guaranteed.

Tunisia

http://ec.europa.eu/world/enp/docs/2012_enp_pack/progress_report_tunisia_fr.pdf
Tunisia engaged in the universal periodic review (UPR) process in May 2012. Of the 125 recommendations proposed by peers, the Tunisian authorities accepted 110 (96 accepted, in addition to 14 which were declared as being implemented). Tunisia undertook to consider 11 additional recommendations (mainly concerning gender issues and the death penalty) but was unable to accept them because of the debate on the draft constitution in progress in the national Constituent Assembly. Three recommendations were rejected (on lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender rights and the laws criminalising defamation). The Human Rights Council adopted a report on Tunisia at its 21st session on 19 September 2012.

At the Association Council meeting on 19 November 2012, the EU and Tunisia reached political agreement on a new Action Plan enshrining a Privileged Partnership. This joint document contains ambitious commitments in terms of democracy, the rule of law and governance (Title II of the political cooperation section), dialogue and cooperation on issues relating to human rights and to fundamental freedoms (Title III) and cooperation on justice and security (Title V).

The enhanced political cooperation framework should enable the EU to step up dialogue with the Tunisian authorities on various priorities such as combating torture, judicial reform, freedom of speech, abolition of the death penalty and restructuring Tunisia's Comité Supérieur des Droits de l'Homme et des Libertés Fondamentales (Higher Committee on Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms). The EU pointed out the importance of several of these priorities in a statement adopted at the Association Council on 19 November 2012.

As regards cooperation, following an initial call for proposals by the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights in 2011 for election observation by domestic observers, training for political parties and support for freedom of expression and promotion of democratic values, a second call for proposals with a budget of EUR 1 million was published in April 2012. In July 2012 a financing agreement was signed for EUR 7 million to strengthen the role of civil society. In addition, an agreement was concluded with the Tunisian Association for the Integrity and Democracy of Elections (ATIDE) in 2012, granting it an EUR 334 834 subsidy to contribute to the transparency and reliability of the constitutional process.

The CFSP Decision imposing sanctions on 48 individuals with close links to the regime of former President Ben Ali (assets freeze and visa ban) was renewed for a further year in January 2012.

Algeria

Algeria has explicitly asked the EU to facilitate structured dialogues with civil society and help develop better communication (as evidenced during the recent talks on the programming of EU cooperation for 2014-2017). The EU considers this to be an important opportunity not to be missed and which can also help enhance the credibility of civil society participation in Algeria.

A new law on associations was adopted in January 2012 as part of a reform package that gives the government broad powers including regarding registration, receiving foreign funds and having goals that go against "national values." EU concerns on the law were raised at the highest level by Commissioner Füle on the occasion of his visit to Algeria in March 2012 and regularly reiterated by the EU at political and sectoral level.

In its regular dialogue with the Algerian authorities, including under the Association Agreement's institutional framework, the EU raised compliance by Algeria with international conventions and standards related to freedom of assembly, freedom of religion and freedom of expression. The EU also called on the Algerian authorities to ensure gender equality and immediate investigation of cases of sexual harassment of women.

HRDs face restrictions to their freedom of expression, association and assembly, and are subjected to acts of intimidation and judicial harassment. Several individual cases have arisen in 2012: Ahmed Kerroumi was found murdered in his office on April 2012. The HR/VP Spokesperson issued a statement expressing shock and sadness about the death of Mr.Kerroumi and asking for an investigation to be launched. In 2012, a number of human rights activists were the object of juridical harassment under Article 100 of the Penal Code "incitation to unarmed mob". The EU sent an observer to the trial of four human rights defenders accused of ‘incitation to unarmed mob’ which took place in September 2012. A short informative report was produced and circulated both to EEAS and Member States Heads of Mission.

Algeria passed the UPR Review in May 2012. In September 2012 it accepted 63 recommendations out of 112 while indicating as "on-going" or "noted" the rest. Algeria reacted negatively to recommendations on freedom of association, assembly and freedom of expression. The government defended the new laws promulgated in January 2012.

The EU sent for the first time, upon Algeria's request, an EOM to observe the legislative elections which took place in May 2012. The EU EOM led by MEP Salafranca produced a report underlining the need for further steps to improve transparency including systematic access for political parties to national electoral list. At the Association Council held in December 2012 the Algerian authorities indicated that a number of the recommendations contained in the report had been followed up. The EU underlined its willingness to support the Algerian authorities on the follow up of the whole set of recommendations.

The first round of negotiations for an Action Plan under the renewed ENP took place 17 October 2012 in Brussels, including on Human Right chapters. Negotiations will continue in the course of the next few years.

In Algeria, in addition to thematic and regional programmes (e.g. EIDHR and Civil Society Facility), components were included in EU bilateral cooperation programmes to support civil society actions, in particular on gender, cultural heritage (21,5 MEUR) and youth employment programmes (23,5 MEUR) which were signed in November 2012.

Furthermore, EU addressed civil society/government relations also through the SPRING Program supported measures. The first SPRING allocation of €10 Million to Algeria will support a Governance programme to address areas where it has been difficult to cooperate before (including the parliament). Civil society representatives such as prominent lawyers associations have been consulted.

The EU Delegation is exploring additional areas for support, including better access to justice, the fight against corruption, and improved transparency and accountability in public finance management. Further SPRING funds are still subject to Algeria taking action to consult civil society representatives on the preparation of the ENP Action Plan. The CNES (Conseil National Economique et Social) and the EU DEL will be taking the lead. Algeria has explicitly asked the EU to facilitate structured dialogues with civil society and help develop better communication (as evidenced during the recent talks on the programming of EU cooperation for 2014-2017). Further clarifications on EU funding of non-government organisations under the new law are also sought, before additional funding might be released.

Morocco

http://ec.europa.eu/world/enp/docs/2012_enp_pack/progress_report_maroc_fr.pdf
The EU and Morocco continued their human rights dialogue, in particular at the seventh meeting of the Subcommittee on Human Rights, Democratisation and Governance in Rabat on 16 and 17 October 2012.

In the course of the dialogue, the EU urged Morocco to proceed with the implementation of the new Constitution of 2011, which requires the adoption of 19 organic laws and other regulations and the strengthening of new entities and institutions. To date, 16 organic laws which need to be adopted in order to implement the new constitution properly are still unfinished.

In its dialogue with the Moroccan authorities, the EU drew attention to the importance of guaranteeing freedom of association and expression, following the finding that practical difficulties remain in the area of freedom of association (registration and issue of receipts) and a number of reports of police violence and arbitrary arrests of demonstrators during peaceful demonstrations. As regards the reform of the Press Code, the EU reiterated the need to adopt a new press code that was in line with the new Constitution as soon as possible, and to abolish the prison sentences which still applied, particularly to certain journalists and bloggers.

The EU has financed a number of programmes designed to boost freedom of expression in Morocco via the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR). The instrument also provided EUR 1.2 million in 2012 to fund a large number of democracy and human rights projects in Morocco.

Morocco underwent review at the 13th Universal Periodic Review session (May 2012) and accepted 141 of the 148 recommendations made by the Human Rights Council. The recommendations which Morocco did not support concerned the withdrawal of declarations on CEDAW and the revision of provisions of the Family Code on polygamy, the marriage of minors and equality between men and women in inheritance matters, the monitoring of human rights in the Sahara by Minurso and the abolition of the death penalty or the introduction of a de jure moratorium. Morocco also announced its intention of cooperating with the UN Human Rights Council's special procedures. At the EU's urging, the Moroccan Council of Ministers passed three laws in November 2012 approving the Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture and other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women and the Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. However, Morocco has still to lodge its instruments of accession to these mechanisms.

The institutional human rights system, which comprises the Inter-ministerial Human Rights Delegation (DIDH), the CNDH (National Human Rights Council) and the Ombudsman's office was boosted by the creation of 13 regional CNDH committees. Following an organisational audit, the EU signed an agreement with the Moroccan government to provide support in the form of SPRING grants of EUR 3 million to boost CNDH capacity. This support is also intended to support the DIDH in carrying out its assignments.

Lastly, as regards the human rights of migrants, both civil society and the UNHCR and the IOM emphasised that there had been many cases of violence committed by the security forces. These problems were raised during dialogue between the EU and the Moroccan authorities.

Morocco's seat on the UN Security Council enabled it to play a constructive role on major international political issues and in crisis management; Morocco took a particular interest in the Syrian conflict, cooperating with the EU on human rights.

Morocco stepped up its cooperation with the Council of Europe in a number of areas, including accession to a number of Council of Europe Conventions and the launch of the "Strengthening democratic reform in the southern Neighbourhood" programme financed by the EU.

Western Sahara

The legal status of the Western Sahara territory and the question of sovereignty remain unresolved; the territory is contested between Morocco and the Polisario Front. It is considered a non self-governed territory by the United Nations.

The Morocco-controlled parts of Western Sahara (WS) are divided into several provinces treated as integral parts of the kingdom. The Polisario Front is presently based at the Tindouf refugee camps in Algeria, which it controls. It also controls the part of Western Sahara to the east of the Berm.

MINURSO mandate (UN peacekeeping mission) in WS will expire on 30 April 2013.

The Western Sahara conflict has resulted in severe human rights abuses, constantly reported by external reporters and human rights activists. Both Morocco and the Polisario accuse each other of violating the human rights of the populations under their control, in the Moroccan-controlled parts of Western Sahara and the Tindouf refugee camps in Algeria, respectively.

In its contact with both parties directly involved (Morocco, Polisario Front), also using the EU-Morocco political dialogue, in its statement at the UN General Assembly of 15 October 2012, and in replying to parliamentary questions, the European Union has repeatedly (i) Expressed concern about the long duration of the Western Sahara conflict and the implications for security and cooperation in the region; (ii) Reaffirmed full support for the UN Secretary-General's efforts to achieve a just, lasting and mutually acceptable political solution, which will provide for the self-determination of the people of Western Sahara in the context of arrangements consistent with the principles and purposes of the charter of the United Nations; (iii) Commended the work of Ambassador Christopher Ross as the Personal Envoy of the Secretary-General. Strongly encouraged the parties and neighbouring states to continue to work with him to move the political process forward; (iv) Called on all parties to restrain from violence; (v) Supported UN Security Council Resolution 2044 (2012) which underlines "the importance of improving human rights situation in Western Sahara and the Tindouf camps" and encourages "the parties to work with the international community to develop and implement independent and credible measure to ensure full respect for human rights, bearing in mind their relevant obligations under international law;" (vi) Welcomed the opening of the National Council on Human Rights Commissions operating in Dakhla and Laayoune; (vii) Expressed concern referring to the situation of the 24 Saharawi activists in prison in Salé; (viii) Indicated readiness, should a political solution to the conflict be within reach, to consider supporting measures in order to facilitate the implementation of such a solution.

During the twenty-second session of the Human Rights Council, the UN Special Rapporteur on torture and other cruel, inhumane or degrading treatment or punishment, reported on the use of torture and ill-treatment including rape, severe beating and isolation, by Moroccan law-enforcement officials, particularly of inmates accused of participating in pro-independence activities. The use of excessive force in repressing demonstrations and during arrests of persons suspected of participating in demonstrations calling for self-determination of the Sahrawi population has also been reported. The EU raised its concerns about alleged human rights violations by Moroccan security forces and reports of poor detention conditions in prisons in Salé during the course of the EU-Morocco political dialogue.

Libya

Following the revolution in 2011, Libya is facing a number of important challenges, including the putting in place of a functioning public administration, the restoring of public order, transitional justice, rule of law and economic development. Security is the most pressing concern. **Security problems** include the need to enhance security, opportunistic kidnappings, revenge killings, provocation attacks and bombings, inter-communal fighting and a sharp increase of common crime.

The EU is currently funding 19 projects in the sectors of security, justice and rule of law. Reforming the police and the justice sector, improving the criminal investigation and threat assessment capacity of the Libyan police and fostering an effective transitional justice process are some of the objectives targeted by some of the on-going programs.

Moreover, the EU is preparing the deployment of a civilian CSDP mission to support capacity building for border security/management in Libya. European experts will advise, mentor, and train Libyan personnel so as to develop Libya's capacities for securing its land, sea and air borders. Management of migration flows and respect of human rights would also be part of the task.

During 2012 several **human rights violations** have been cause of concern. Despite the governments public commitment to bring detention centers under central control, limited progress has been achieved. Continuing reports of torture, illegal detention and abuses of migrants, particularly against those of Sub Saharan origin, have been issued by civil society and International organisations. (Amnesty International, International Federation for Human Rights and Human Rights Watch). According to the Libyan Humanitarian Rellief Agency, there are approximately 72,000 Internally Displaced People (IDP) throughout the country. UNHCR has reported cases of mistreatment against them.

On 31 January 2012 the EU reacted to the first reports of ill-treatment of detainees in Libya. In her statement, the HRVP called for the respect of the rights of all detainees throughout Libya in accordance with international standards. The statement also called on the authorities to accelerate the process of bringing all places of detention under their control and to undertake thorough, impartial and effective investigation of allegations of violations of detainees' rights.

Following the reports of armed clashes in Sebha in March 2012, the EU called for restraint and urged the government to redouble its efforts so calm could be restored.

The HR/VP condemned in the strongest possible terms the attack on the US Consulate in Benghazi on 11 September 2012. The HR/VP expressed her deepest sympathy to the families of the victims and the US authorities and urged the Libyan authorities to work tirelessly to bring those responsible for these killings to justice.

In November 2012, the European Parliament adopted a resolution on the situation of migrants in Libya. During the debate prior to its adoption participants underlined that the EU will continue to call on the authorities to ensure respect for internationally agreed human rights standards; at the same time, the EU will continue to support the authorities in meeting their responsibilities under international law.

Funds originating from ENPI, IfS and EIDHR have been activated to put together a support package (€20 million) aimed at improving the protection of vulnerable groups against human rights violations. Enhancing human rights based reforms in Libyan detention system, strengthening of the capacities for effective and protection-sensitive management of mixed migration movements in Libya, advocacy and support to torture victims and victims of enforced disappearances or support reconciliation processes and democratic transition in the country are some of the objectives sought by these projects.

In terms of democratic transition, the **elections of 7 July 2012** were no doubt the highlight of the year when the Libyans went to vote for the first time in more than four decades to elect their constituent assembly.

The EU Election Assessment Team (EU EAT), led by MEP Alexander Graf Lambsdorff, deployed in the country to cover this historic elections, concluded that the electoral process had been efficiently administered, pluralistic and overall peaceful. The final report, issued on 21 October 2012, includes the EU EAT's findings along with 39 recommendations, with a view to improving the conduct of the upcoming elections in the country.

The cooperation of the Libyan authorities with the **International Criminal Court** (ICC) regarding the cases of Saif al-Islam Qadhafi and Abdullah al-Senussi, both subject to an arrest warrant issued by the ICC following the adoption of UNSCR 1970, still constitutes an issue.

On 19 June 2012, the HR/VP issued a statement following the arrest and detention of four staff members of the ICC in the Libya. The statement emphasized the legal obligation of Libya under the UN Security Council's resolution 1970 (2011) to co-operate fully with the ICC and to recognize the privileges and immunities of ICC staff. On 2 July 2012, the HR/VP welcomed the release of the four ICC staff and commended the efforts of all who worked to achieve this result.

IV Russia and Central Asia

Russia

The human rights situation in Russia remained central to the EU-Russia relationship in 2012, an election year in Russia, marked during its five first months by numerous opposition gatherings and calls for effective domestic election observation. In the course of the year, new legislation was adopted on the rules of demonstrations, forcing Russian NGOs that receive foreign funds to register as "foreign agents", reinstating libel as a criminal offence and increasing control over the internet. The EU was particularly concerned that the new legislation led to increased pressure on civil society and resulted in a decrease of NGO activity in Russia. The High Representative/Vice President voiced her concerns with a series of statements on legislative changes as well as on specific measures taken against members of the opposition. The prosecution, including arrests and trials, of opposition activists and protest leaders during the election period and afterwards , with special regard to the "Bolotnaya" square case remained a source of EU's concern.

In that context, human rights issues continued to feature prominently in the political dialogue between the EU and Russia, including at the two EU-Russia Summits, which took place during the year: in St Petersburg in June, and in Brussels in December, as well as at the Justice, Freedom and Security Permanent Partnership Council in October in Nicosia. The EU conveyed its concerns in those fora with regard to human rights situation and restrictive legislation in Russia.

The EU Special Representative for Human Rights Stavros Lambrinidis visited Russia in October to participate in the EU-Russia Civil Society Forum in St Petersburg. He established contacts with the Russian Ambassador for Human Rights Dolgov, met the Chair of the Presidential Council for Civil Society and Human Rights Mikhail Fedotov and the Federal Ombudsman for Children Pavel Asthakov. He also held dedicated meetings with Russian civil society, within and outside Russia.

The EU and Russia continued their regular biannual human rights consultations in 2012. The fifteenth and sixteenth rounds were held in July and in December, both in Brussels. So as to increase their efficiency and ensure that a genuine dialogue takes place, the EU continued to urge Russia to adjust the modalities of the human rights consultations, in particular by involving ministries and agencies other than the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, by meeting with Russian and international NGOs in the margins of the consultations and by organizing the consultations in alternating venues. Both sides had the opportunity to discuss in particular developments in the rule of law (judiciary, law enforcement bodies, prisons) and to seek clarity on individual cases of concern by exchanging written lists of individual cases. The EU raised concerns over the deteriorating situation of civil society, including media freedom, the situation of NGOs in Russia and the new legislation affecting their work, as well as the situation in the North Caucasus. The rights of the child and issues of discrimination and racism were also addressed, in particular by the Russian Federation who flagged its concerns on certain practices in EU Member States. The EU took the opportunity of the consultations to submit enquiries with respect to specific individual cases and welcomed the fact that Russia provided written clarification to a number of those cases in December 2012. Finally, and as in previous occasions, the EU and Russia explored ways to improve their cooperation in international fora (UN General Assembly and Human Rights Council; OSCE and Council of Europe).

The EU met representatives of Russian and international NGOs, in Brussels, Moscow and St Petersburg prior and after each round of consultations. In St Petersburg, the EU held a series of meetings focusing on the rights of the child and on the situation of LGBTI individuals, who had been affected by the adoption of a regional "anti-homosexual propaganda" bill.

During the year the European Parliament paid increased attention to the situation in the Russian Federation and invited the High Representative/Vice President to state the EU's position with regard to the political and human rights situation in Russia several times before the Parliament. The EU-Russia parliamentary meetings focused specifically in the role of civil society.

The EU paid a particular attention to the case of Sergei Magnitsky. The efforts of the Presidential Council on Human Rights and Civil Society to seek clarity on the circumstances of the death of lawyer Sergey Magnitsky were largely ignored in the course of the official investigations. The EU noted some developments in the case of Mikhail Khodorkovsky and will closely monitor their implementation. Both cases remain high on the EU's agenda.

Finally, on August 2012, the High Representative/Vice President issued a statement to express her deep disappointment with the disproportionate sentence against the members of the punk band "Pussy Riot". The HR/VP recalled Russia's commitments to respect its international obligations to ensure a fair, transparent and independent legal process.

In the framework of the Visa dialogue, the EU and Russia continued the implementation process of the Common Steps. In this context a lot of information concerning the respect of human rights and trafficking in human beings, as covered by the Common Steps, was exchanged.

Central Asia (regional)

The EU Strategy for a New Partnership with Central Asia, adopted in 2007, provides the political framework for EU relations with Central Asian countries. It prioritises human rights and the Rule of Law for cooperation with the region. On 25 June 2012, the EU Foreign Affairs Council adopted the third Progress Report on the implementation of the Strategy and outlined future orientations. The report reconfirms the priority areas and highlights EU support for human rights promotion and protection, democratic reforms and civil society development, including through strengthening the Rule of Law and building the capacity of civil society organisations.

During 2012, the EU continued to raise human rights issues and individual cases through bilateral human rights dialogues and political contacts with Central Asian leaders, including during HR/VP Ashton's visits to the Kyrgyz Republic, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Kazakhstan following the EU-Central Asia ministerial meeting, which took place on 27 November 2012 in Bishkek. Human rights and civil society were high on the agenda during the HR's meetings. She encouraged her counterparts to implement further reforms aimed at liberalisation and democratisation. During every stop of her four-country visit, HR/VP Ashton met with representatives of civil society.
In the five years since the EU-Central Asia Strategy was launched, the structured human rights dialogues that have been established with all countries in the region have reached a certain maturity. These dialogues now allow open discussions on issues of concern, including individual cases of human rights defenders. The dialogues are prepared in close consultation with local civil society organisations and international non-governmental human rights organisations. A number of civil society seminars have been organised with the support of the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights. These seminars provide an opportunity for European and Central Asia civil society representatives, academia and state officials to exchange views. The seminars have produced detailed recommendations on which legislative and practical changes are needed to ensure full compliance with international and national standards.

In the framework of the EU-Central Asia Strategy the Rule of Law Initiative, operational since 2008, has assisted the countries of Central Asia to bring their national judicial practices and legislation in line with international standards. The third Ministerial Conference of justice ministers on 6-7 December in Brussels saw endorsement of the recommendation of the regional Rule of Law Initiative seminars, which took place on 2 and 3 November 2012 in Astana and on 12 and 13 November 2012 in Brussels. The ministers also defined future priorities for the Rule of Law Initiative. The EU has also developed bilateral cooperation programmes and projects of direct relevance to human rights with the Central Asian states at the bilateral level. In particular, the EU has supported reform of criminal justice systems as well as sponsored human rights awareness raising and capacity building measures. Through dialogue and joint projects, the EU closely cooperated with its international partners: the Council of Europe and its specialised bodies, notably the Venice Commission; the UN and the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights; and the OSCE.

Contributing to the implementation of EU human rights policy is included in the mandate of the EU Special Representative for Central Asia, who until June was Pierre Morel; in June Patricia Flor was nominated to the position.

Kazakhstan

In 2012 the human rights situation in Kazakhstan continued to be significantly affected by the aftermath of the violent clashes between the oil workers and the police in December 2011 in the Western town of Zhanaozen. Several related court trials took place, which resulted in effective sentences for oil workers, policemen who were accused of excessive use of force, the governor of the city, head of a detention centre [where a detained oil worker had died due to mistreatment and negligence] as well as prominent opposition leader Vladimir Kozlov. The EU monitored part of the court hearings and expressed deep concern on the Court depriving the detainees of their right to fair trial, as well as on the lack of investigation for allegations of inhuman treatment (torture) in detention facilities. EU also expressed concern in a statement by the spokesperson of the High Representative Catherine Ashton published on 9 October 2012 that the court trial of the opposition leader Mr. Kozlov carried political overtones, and that there were several shortcomings in the judicial processes, which ware observed by the EU

Over the year, in bilateral meetings with the Kazakh authorities, the European Union also expressed serious concerns about the restrictions of freedom of media in Kazakhstan[4]. These concerns were aggravated by a court decision that suspended several opposition media, based on charges related to the events in Zhanaozen in 2011.

[4] http://eeas.europa.eu/delegations/vienna/documents/eu_osce/permanent_council/2012/pc_935_eu_on_taj-and_kazakhstan.pdf

The respect for freedom of religion and belief in Kazakhstan was in the centre of attention in 2012 both as EU priority and in terms of important relevant developments taking place in the country, including the adoption of a new Law on Religion which required the re-registration of all religious groups.

In 2012 Kazakhstan was elected as a member of the UN Human Rights Council for the period 2013-2015. Following this a working group on human dimension was created in the country with the participation of government officials and prominent NGOs and human rights defenders. At the same time the authorities published a report on the human rights situation in the country covering 2011.

On 8-9 November in Astana, the EU organised its regular civil society seminar with the participation of experts from the region, where the topic of «Contribution of civil society to legal and judicial reforms in Kazakhstan» was discussed. There were one hundred participants, including civil society representatives from Kazakhstan, Central Asia, and Europe, representatives of the Kazakh government and Parliament, academics, representatives of international organisations, representatives of diplomatic missions of EU Member-States in Kazakhstan, and legal experts. A series of specific recommendations were developed, for the Kazakh Government and officials, civil society, and the European Union and international community.

Kyrgyz Republic

The Kyrgyz Republic continues to be at the forefront of democratization processes in the Central Asia region. The new constitutional principles were upheld in September 2012 when a new government came into power according to parliamentary dynamics. The country continued to take important steps in judiciary reform, the new government declared the fight against corruption to be among its top priorities and confirmed its openness to engage with the EU in these efforts. The Kyrgyz Republic is a pilot country in the region for Democracy Support in EU's External Relations.

In 2012, the EU continued to engage in political dialogue with the authorities on human rights issue and the rule of law reform in the country and to cooperate closely with civil society and international organizations. In particular, during the fourth round of the Human Rights Dialogue of 19 September 2012 the EU addressed access to justice and the right to a fair trial, the prevention of torture, the protection of the rights of persons belonging to minorities, the progress in establishing a legal and administrative framework to protect human rights and implementation of recommendations by international organizations and bodies. The discussion of human rights issues was followed up at the EU-Kyrgyz Republic Cooperation Committee on 23-24 October 2012, focusing also on the importance of a comprehensive judicial reform. During her first visit to the Kyrgyz Republic in November 2012, EU HR/VP Ashton welcomed the determination of the people of the Kyrgyzstan to pursue democratic reform and the progress achieved and discussed the importance of human rights and the rule of law for prosperity and sustainable development. She had an exchange with representatives of civil society on the key challenges, including the pace of judicial reform and administration of justice, inter-ethnic dialogue and integration, and on the vital role played by NGOs in the reform processes.

An EU-Kyrgyz Republic Civil Society Seminar on the Role of NGOs in the Implementation of the Rule of Law and Human Rights held on 8-9 February 2012 in Bishkek enjoyed active participation on the Kyrgyz side. During the seminar, recommendations were adopted in the fields of anti-corruption, judicial reform, law enforcement agencies and police reform, and torture prevention. These recommendations were presented to all major State institutions, incorporated into the human rights dialogue and will further feed into overall political dialogue and into the EU programming of assistance. A few important recommendations in the field of torture prevention have been partially implemented since then, notably the adoption of the law "On the National Centre of the Kyrgyz Republic on Prevention of Torture and other Cruel, Inhumane or degrading Treatment or Punishment".

The Kyrgyz Republic is going through a transition period, the work on bringing legislation in line with the new constitution and international standards continues and the EU is committed to continue its support for consolidating democracy, strengthening the rule of law and implementing judiciary reforms. Judicial reform and the rule of law is one of the three priority areas for EU assistance under the Development Cooperation Instrument for 2011-2013. An extensive support under the Instrument for Stability, the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR), Support to Non State Actors is rendered to promote inter-ethnic reconciliation, the protection of national minorities, of youth, women, people with disabilities as well as to support civil society.

Tajikistan

In 2012, the EU continued to monitor various Human Rights developments in Tajikistan closely, to engage in political dialogue with the authorities as well as to co-operate actively with civil society and international organizations. The EU focused, in particular, on promoting prevention from torture, calling for freedom of expression and uninterrupted access to information, encouraging de-radicalization among various layers of the society, especially youth as well as working to facilitate the existence of a vibrant civil society, in line with Tajikistan's international commitments in the area of freedom of association. A number of EIDHR projects focussed on promoting the rights of women, children and people with disabilities, thus calling more attention to non-discrimination and equal opportunities for everybody.

In July 2012, violent clashes erupted in the Gorno-Badakshan Province (GBAO) between government forces and armed local groups. The EU called for a transparent investigation of the events and for guarantees on the proper application of the rule of law. The EU also expressed concern over restrictions on the access of information, including blocking of several Internet websites.

The year 2012 was marked for Tajikistan by important Human Rights discussions in the international arena. After undergoing the Universal Periodical Review (UPR) in October 2011, the Tajik Government accepted a majority of the recommendations in March 2012 (out of 131 recommendations, 104 were accepted and 7 rejected). In May 2012, the country was visited by two UN Special Rapporteurs - UN Special Rapporteur on Torture and other Cruel, Inhuman and Degrading Treatment or Punishment as well as UN Special Rapporteur on the right of everyone to the enjoyment of the highest standards of physical and mental health. In October 2012, Tajikistan submitted the 2nd periodical review to the UN Committee against Torture. The EU welcomed the openness and high commitment of the Tajik Government regarding these exercises. Other positive developments, welcomed by the EU in 2012 were the (partial) decriminalization of libel and the adoption of the domestic violence law.

In June 2012, a two-day EU-Tajikistan civil society forum examined aspects of torture prevention with healthy participation from civil society, governmental and international experts (eg Amnesty International, Association for the Prevention of torture, Physicians for Human Rights). It resulted in the elaboration of substantial recommendations that were presented to the Tajik Government and will be further discussed at the next round of EU- Tajikistan Human Rights Dialogue.

Human Rights were also discussed at the EU - Tajikistan Co-operation Committee in November 2012. The main discussion points related to the freedoms of expression, religion and association. During her first visit to Tajikistan at the end of November 2012, the EU HR/VP Catherine Ashton emphasized the importance of having a strong and vibrant civil society in the country. A Delegation of the Members of the European Parliament, which visited Dushanbe in May 2012, established contacts with Tajik civil society representatives. Other high level visitors, such as the EU Special Representative for Central Asia, Ambassador Patrica Flor, and former EU SR Ambassador Pierre Morel, also met with NGOs and Human Rights Defenders during the course of 2012.

Turkmenistan

Turkmenistan continues to be a closed country, with limited exposure to the outside world and in great need of further reforms. Following his re-election in February 2012, President Berdymukhamedov embarked on a few reforms which have allowed for some limited openness as illustrated by the adoption of a law on political parties, which introduces political pluralism (in theory) for the first time in history, or the release of prisoners of conscience and a first instance of cooperation with the ICRC.

But the human rights situation remains worrying. Significant restrictions on travelling abroad as well as the existence of "black lists" remain issues of concern. While allowed by law, the registration of NGOs is heavily constrained in practice. As a consequence almost no independent domestic NGOs operate in Turkmenistan, while international NGOs cannot obtain registration. In addition, there are well-documented reports of torture in Turkmen prisons.

The Joint Committee between the EU and Turkmenistan took place in June 2012. In the framework of its political dialogue with Turkmenistan, the EU has been raising its concerns about human rights issues consistently in a number of areas, where much remains to be done: democratic transition and public accountability, strengthening the rule of law and guaranteeing protection of human rights and media freedom. It is worth mentioning that Turkmenistan is making an effort to develop its relations with other countries and to increase its cooperation with international organisations, including those involved in the human dimension activities, such as the OSCE and the UN. But progress is limited and the current leadership remains focused on strengthening its hold on power.

The EU is committed to continue monitoring the human rights situation in Turkmenistan closely, and raising its concerns, including during the EU-Turkmenistan Human Rights dialogue. The fifth round of the dialogue was postponed in 2012 and will instead be organized in Ashgabat on 15 May 2013.

In terms of assistance, the EU is currently financing a joint-project implemented by UNDP/OHCHR in Ashgabat "Strengthening the national capacity of Turkmenistan to promote and protect human rights". This project is actually the first donor wide cooperation intervention on Human Rights issues and the first EU-UNDP joint action in Turkmenistan. Launched in 2011, the project has two main objectives: (i) improving the capacity of the Government of Turkmenistan to comply with the international human rights standards; and (ii) developing a wide scale public awareness strategy on human rights, targeting different social and institutional groups: students, teachers, judges, policemen.

Uzbekistan

Part and parcel with the EU policy of conditional re-engagement with Uzbekistan, the issues referring to human rights have been regularly addressed in every meeting held between the EU and Uzbekistan under the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement (PCA). Such was notably the case during the Sub-Committee on Economy, Trade and Investment (February), the Cooperation Committee (July) and, more specifically, the dedicated Human Rights Dialogue (November). On this latter occasion, the EU particularly underlined the issues of detention conditions and the basic freedoms of expression, information, religion, belief, association and assembly, dwelling in particular on the protection of the most vulnerable groups. The EU took note of the policy reform objectives announced by Uzbekistan in a number of fields, while insisting on implementation aspects and offering, if needed, its assistance to achieve them. The visit paid by the EU High Representative/Vice President Ashton to Uzbekistan (November) provided another opportunity to convey the EU message on human rights at the highest political level, as well as to meet with a relevant sample of civil society organisations active in Uzbekistan.

The EU has devoted priority attention to the long-standing issue of child labour in 2012, so as to notably address the concerns expressed by the European Parliament in this respect when examining the Textile protocol to the PCA in late 2011. A dedicated seminar on the implementation of the conventions ratified by Uzbekistan with the International Labour Organisation (ILO) was convened in Tashkent in May 2012, in which both the ILO and the EU actively participated. The EU notes that fewer children were involved in the 2012 cotton harvest (international observers could notice that the number of children below 15 years of age employed in the fields had been significantly curbed in most regions) and hopes this trend will continue. With a view to consolidating this evolution, the EU has kept advocating the resumption of a broad-based cooperation agenda between Uzbekistan and the ILO, including on the monitoring of the implementation of the relevant ILO conventions. The issue of child labour however remains a matter of concern.

In consistency with its policy of conditional engagement towards Uzbekistan, the EU has sought to develop cooperation responses with Uzbekistan to address some key human rights issues. To this effect, a €10 million programme addressing Criminal Justice reform was launched in early 2012 in cooperation with the relevant Uzbek law enforcement authorities. In addition, the design of a dedicated assistance project aimed at addressing degrading treatments in prison has been pursued. A €10 million Rural Development programme was also signed in mid-2012, with a view to promoting agriculture modernisation and diversification, and diminishing the country's reliance on cotton monoculture. Other relevant EU cooperation activities include the support to NGOs through the EU-EIDHR programme. In addition to bilateral cooperation, the EU has pushed for Uzbekistan's participation in regional Rule of Law Initiative being implemented in the context of the EU Central Asia Strategy.

A political dialogue on human rights and rule of law issues has been gathering momentum over 2012 between the newly-opened EU Delegation and the Uzbek authorities, and should intensify further as the EU institutional presence and cooperation in Uzbekistan consolidates.

V Africa

African Union

The African Union (AU)-EU Human Rights Dialogue, initiated in 2008, continued to provide an important forum for exchanges on efforts to promote human rights and democracy. EU Special Representative for Human Rights Stavros Lambrinidis represented the EU at the Dialogue in 2012 which took place in Addis Ababa. The main issues discussed were AU-EU cooperation on matters of common concern including racism; the right to development; death penalty;; and the implementation of the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights. Both parties also agreed to intensify cooperation in areas such as violence against women and freedom of association. During the Dialogue, civil society representatives presented the recommendations of the third AU-EU civil society seminar held in 2011 on elections and the right to housing.

In the framework of the Africa-EU Partnership on Governance and Human Rights, the AU and EU Delegations in Geneva jointly organised a Workshop in June on the issue of Racism, focusing on racial discrimination and incitement to racial hatred. The meeting was a first step to enhance cooperation at the Human Rights Council. Both sides identified means to step up cooperation such as holding side events that could possibly lead to joint resolutions. In addition to racism, the meeting also identified topics for future discussion, including women and children's rights, the universal periodic review, economic, social and cultural rights, freedom of religion or belief, freedom of assembly and freedom of expression.

Angola

In 2012, the EU's attention focussed essentially on the finalisation and signing of a comprehensive "Angola-EU Joint Way Forward (JWF)" partnership agreement, the 2012 general elections and the follow up of the Human rights situation in the Angolan provinces of Cabinda, and North and South Lunda. European Commission President José Manuel Barroso visited the country in April 2012 and aside from meeting high ranking authorities he also took the opportunity to talk to representatives of the Angolan opposition parties, the Catholic Church and civil society organisations involved in the defence of Human Rights.

Angola-EU Joint Way Forward (JWF)

Angola and the EU agreed to reinforce their political dialogue and engage in a more active political cooperation. Founded on the Cotonou Partnership and guided by the fundamental principles of democracy and the rule-of-law, sovereignty and respect for territorial integrity, human rights and good governance, the JWF agreement was signed in Brussels in July 2012. The JWF is meant to be a permanent and inclusive process of dialogue and cooperation in different areas such as peace and security, good governance and human rights.

General elections on 31st August 2012

In addition to providing electoral support to the PALOP[5] group and specific EIDHR financing to NGO projects, following an invitation by the Angolan authorities the EU sent an Election Expert Mission (EEM) to Angola. The EU recognised the substantial effort that was invested in the elections by the Angolan electoral authorities and commended the well organised voting process, but noted the concerns voiced by some political parties and civil society organisations in relation to a number of shortcomings within the electoral process. In the interest of increasing confidence in the electoral process, on 21 September 2012, HR/VP C. Ashton delivered a Declaration stating that the EU is ready to support the Angolan authorities to ensure that these concerns are effectively addressed in future elections.

Human Rights protection

In 2012 the EU Heads of Mission conducted a high profile visit to the northern oil-rich Angolan province of Cabinda and to the diamond-endowed North and South Lunda provinces following alleged human rights violations. There they discussed the issue with the local authorities, human rights organisations, churches and individuals and decided to continue monitoring the situation and reinforce the presence of international development partners in those provinces.

5 Portuguese-speaking African countries

Benin

In October 2012 Benin made an important step forward in its respect for human rights by abolishing the death penalty, following the entry into force of the second Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) ratified in 2011. Benin was elected to the United Nations Humans Rights Council at the end of 2011 and played a constructive role in its discussions during 2012. In October it underwent its second Universal Periodic Review, participating in an open and cooperative manner. In December 2012 Benin passed a law setting up the Beninese Human Rights Commission in line with the Paris principles.

However, there is still much room for improvement, in particular as regards the judicial system, prison conditions and the rights of women and children. It was on these areas that EU action focused in 2012. It supported improvements to the legislative process and access to justice by providing EUR 4.5 million under a 10th EDF programme to support justice sector reform (PARJ) (2010 to 2014) and through regular dialogue with the government and members of the National Assembly. In order to improve prison conditions, the PARJ project supported the establishment of a prison service emergency plan which, as a first step, set up a permanent system to monitor prisoner numbers. The EU supported moves to end discrimination against women and promote respect for women's rights through projects such as ETODE (EIDHR) designed to raise awareness, support the reintegration of victims of violence, and strengthen local NGOs in their efforts to combat discrimination and violence against women. Respect for children's rights and combating child trafficking, which are still important issues, were supported by several projects under the civil society support programme (10th EDF).

During his visit to Cotonou last October, President Barroso encouraged Benin to continue working to promote respect for human rights.

Botswana

Through the political dialogue, in 2012 the EU raised human rights issues such as the death penalty, gender equality, or the situation of the *San* in the Central Kalahari Game Reserve with the Government of Botswana.

The EU also organised an Art Show, followed by discussion, to commemorate the World and European Day against the Death Penalty. This event resulted in several press releases issued in national newspapers, as it has been the case for Human Rights Day 2012. The latter was part of a dual ceremony that commemorated also the bestowing of the Nobel Peace Prize to the EU and was marked by a public donation to the NGO SOS Children's Villages.

At end of 2012 - and with much encouragement from the EU Delegation - the Government of Botswana finally adopted an updated NGO Policy and decided to establish an NGO Council, an entity where both the Government and civil society are to exchange and coordinate their views. This Council is a necessary pre-condition for the use of EU funds for Non-State Actors (NSAs) in Botswana under the current 10th European Development Fund (EDF) to the tune of € 8 million - part of which could then be used to support Human rights defenders (HRDs). This is complemented by an initial 0.6 million EURO local call for proposals being now prepared in the context of the EIDHR.

Since the bulk of the 10th EDF envelope for Botswana is dedicated to the improvement of the Education Sector, children's rights - Art 28 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (right to education) - are also addressed through the EU's main programme in the country.

Burkina Faso

The EU's priorities in Burkina Faso in 2012 focused on the following areas: a) Institutional Framework; b) Death Penalty; c) Detention Conditions and Trials Duration; d) Justice; e) Freedom of Expression; f) Human Rights Defenders and Civil Society; g) Women's Rights; h) Children's Rights.

The overall situation of Human Rights in Burkina Faso is deemed relatively good, although some cases of abuse do exist such as torture in police custody and arbitrary arrest of protesters. Freedoms of religion and of opinion, in particular press freedom, are guaranteed by the Constitution and are widely respected.

However there is a general lack of trust in the judicial system, as most of the population do not have access. Moreover, the executive power has a great influence over the judiciary. Corruption and impunity are perceived as widespread despite recent government campaigns against corruption. In 2012, joint EU and France projects supported the Court of Appeal.

Related areas were food security, rural development and infrastructures in a context of food crisis and serious unemployment.

The political debate remained open and there are active opposition parties. In Parliament (National Assembly) the ruling party kept its absolute majority. The Burkinabe democratic system is still under consolidation and in need of support, given the limited financial assets of the State. The EU contributed to the organisation of parliamentary elections on 2 December 2012, through a joint project with EU Member States and UNDP.

The elections were deemed as free, credible and peaceful by the international community with a high rate of participation. President Compaore´s supporters won 97 out of the 127 seats in Parliament, his party, the CPD, holding by itself 70 seats and therefore an absolute majority.

Women's and children's rights were a sector in which some EU Member States (Denmark, Germany, the Netherlands, and Sweden) were particularly active in 2012. The rights of women and children are asserted by the law, though their respect in practice proves difficult for socio-cultural reasons. Rape incidence is high and FGM, though decreasing after government-sponsored anti-excision campaigns, is still carried out. Many people, especially in the countryside, do not have access to proper health, education and sanitation. According to the latest UNDP data, the literacy rate is 29% for men and 22% for women. Consequently, the gender issue has been included in the government National Strategy for Development (SCADD), supported by the EU.

In Burkina Faso, the death penalty is formally in force, although death sentences are rarely pronounced and no one has been executed since 1988. Burkina has also taken an abolitionist stand in many international forums. The EU Delegation carried out demarches in 2012 to ask successfully for Burkinabe support for EU-sponsored UN Human Rights resolutions. In 2010 and 2011, annual meetings on Human Rights took place between the EU and organisations dedicated to the protection of Human Rights. Heads of Mission of the EU Member States agreed to nominate a focal point each year to follow the issue and Denmark ensured this role in 2010 and 2011 with the support of the EU Delegation. However, no meeting of this type was held in 2012. At the end of the year, aiming to re-launch these meetings in the following years, the EU Delegation appointed its own Focal Point for Human Rights, while Denmark continued to assure liaison with local Human Rights defenders.

Burundi

Despite an improvement of the human rights situation in Burundi since the end of the war (1993-2005), following the 2010 elections the political climate deteriorated and the human rights and security situation worsened. According to the UN, in 2012 there were 30 extra judiciary executions, 16 cases of torture and 59 cases of mistreatment. Impunity, lack of judicial independence,, abuse of power by local administrative authorities and corruption are all widespread. In total 854 persons were murdered in circumstances connected to the security situation, as maintained by the UN Office in Burundi in 2012.

In addition, Batwa (a minority group representing 1% of the population) and albinos continue to suffer discrimination and violence. The EU has financed an EIDHR project to protect the rights of albinos.

The killings of some civil society leaders and cases of arbitrary detention have shocked public opinion. The EU Delegation together with MS locally represented has issued some local statements on some judiciary cases.

The Government of Burundi has recently created the Independent National Human Rights Commission and the EU has contributed 400.000 EURO to its establishment.

The new Penal Code, approved in 2009 has introduced some positive changes such as the abolition of death penalty, the increase of the age of penal responsibility from 13 to 15 years, the prohibition of torture andsexual violence. However, it still criminalises homosexuality.

An EU human rights dialogue does not exist as such, but is part of the Article 8 political dialogue. There are regular meetings with Human Rights Defenders (HRDs) which are organized prior to the political dialogue with the Government. EU Political Advisers, as well as EU Heads of Mission, met with Human rights defenders individually on several occasions and continued to gather information on human rights abuses.

Cameroon

In 2012, the EU remained very engaged on the issues of human rights and democratisation in Cameroon in terms of political dialogue and advocacy on one hand and financial support on the other.

In addition to providing continuous support to the national network for the protection of human rights defenders (RENAPDDHO), EU missions in Cameroon have been involved in specific support to human rights defenders subject to threats, in particular lawyers representing clients accused of homosexuality (a criminal offence in Cameroon).

In addition, the EU remains the main donor in the area of justice and detention conditions. EU support has been critical in helping limit the number of people held in pre-trial detention, providing legal advice to inmates, and in contributing to improve the health (including HIV prevention) and sanitation of prisoners. Issues related to the (mis)functioning of the judicial system, in particular in high profile cases, have also been raised with increasing prominence in the framework of the EU's political dialogue with the Government

The EU is also providing support to a series of newspaper articles on prison conditions which are reproduced free of charge by a number of leading private newspapers. This is contributing to an enhanced awareness of poor prison conditions and to the fact that inmates have rights which are being regularly violated.

In 2012, the rights of LGBTI people were raised regularly in the EU's political dialogue with the authorities, the ultimate goal being the decriminalisation of homosexuality in Cameroon. The EU continued to voice strong concern about Court rulings sentencing presumed homosexuals to jail terms, as well as against the apparent lack of state action in response to anonymous threats against LGBTI people or their lawyers. A statement was issued by the HRVP's spokesperson on 20 December 2012 after an appeals court in Cameroon upheld a three-year sentence against Mr. Roger Mbédé found guilty of homosexual conduct.

Freedom of the press is also raised regularly in the framework of the political dialogue. A grant awarded through the EU's non-state actors thematic programme and managed by Radio France International is currently supporting a journalists' trade union in preparing proposals for amendments to the law on social communication and a draft code of conduct against corruption in the media.

The issue of democratisation plays a central role in the political dialogue, where EU Heads of missions have made a number of recommendations to make the electoral process in Cameroon more fair, credible and transparent. The EU has also pointed out the importance of establishing the various institutions foreseen by the 1996 Constitution, in particular the Senate and the Constitutional Council. In this context, financial support has been provided to various NGOs to foster independent election observation, increase public awareness of the issues at stake and encourage objective coverage of the elections by the media.
Linked to democratisation, the fight against corruption has been another area of actionwhere the EU has supported the National Anti-Corruption Commission (CONAC), as well as NGOs working on this issue.

In 2012, the EU Delegation launched a call for proposals under the EIDHR on the issue of trafficking in human beings. It is expected that up to 4 projects tackling this issue will be contracted in early 2013.

Cape Verde

In 2012 the EU and the Republic of Cape Verde celebrated the 5th Anniversary of their Special Partnership, which goes well beyond political and economic cooperation under the Cotonou agreement. One of its pillars relates to good governance and underlines the reinforcement of democracy, rule of law, participation of civil society in the political life of the country, as well as the strengthening of political dialogue and cooperation, in particular in the area of democracy and human rights. The EU Cape Verde partnership gives special attention to women's and children's rights, the situation of migrants, combating domestic violence, pushing for reform of the Cape Verdean judiciary system, fighting corruption, reforming public finances and strengthening the capacities of the public administration in terms of statistical data and good governance of the natural resources. Moreover, under the Security/Stability pillar the parties are bound to promote respect for human rights while managing migration flows and fighting against human trafficking.

In 2008 a new Mobility Partnership was launched to improve the migration management capacities. In this context, on 26 October 2012, during the official visit of the President of the European Commission to Cape Verde, a bilateral Visa Facilitation Agreement was signed. It is expected to enter into force together with the Readmission Agreement in 2013.

In December 2012 the authorities and the EU delegation in Praia completed a 3 year-long project focusing on improving the rights of people with disabilities The EU contributed 127,500 EURO (75% of the total). The project was developed by Handicap International, together with three Cape Verdean partners. It aimed specifically at reinforcing the dialogue between the main handicapped people's organization, civil society and the government, easing information exchange and raising awareness on handicaps in the country. During the project's life Cape Verde ratified the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

During 2012, the country benefitted also from an EU-financed PALOP (Portuguese speaking countries) program supporting elections which focused on educating voters on their rights and paid special attention to women.

The total EU budget for human rights related projects in Cape Verde for the period was approximately 300,000 EUR and covered both Handicap International's project together with another implemented by OMCV- Associação Organização das Mulheres de Cabo Verde /CV Women Association which strengthened the institutional capacity of OMCV to fight gender-based violence.

Central African Republic

EU activities in the Central African Republic in 2012 continued to be dominated by a commitment to human rights and democracy, both in terms of political dialogue and awareness-raising and in terms of financial support.

There was a deterioration in both the political and the security situation in the Central African Republic in 2012, culminating in the eruption of another political/military crisis in December. The HR/VP's spokesperson made a statement on the subject on 21 December 2012, condemning attacks by armed groups, calling on all parties to engage in dialogue and urging full implementation of the existing peace agreement.

The chief human rights concerns included combating impunity, arbitrary detention, detention conditions and ill-treatment, women's rights and violations of children's rights.

At local level, the European Union raised the issue of arbitrary detention and the death penalty with the Central African authorities. The delegation also informed the government of its concerns regarding respect for international humanitarian law by the Central African security forces at the beginning of the crisis in late 2012. In addition, it raised certain human rights questions such as witchcraft at the regular bi-monthly meetings of the enhanced political dialogue.

There were also some favourable developments regarding the death penalty, with the preparation of draft legislation on abolition, following the moratorium which has been in force for about 30 years. The European Union previously co-organised, with France and the BINUCA, an event to raise awareness on World Day against the Death Penalty (10 October 2012). It should be noted that the whole of the Central African political class (presidential majority, extra-parliamentary democratic opposition and civil society) adopted a reform of the electoral code by consensus, on which the Central African Assembly is to take a decision in 2013. The European Union backed this process by supporting the organisation of workshops at which all Central African political stakeholders discussed the amendments to be made to the draft reform of the electoral code.

Regular meetings with representatives of organisations for the defence of human rights were organised by the European Union delegation.

Lastly, in the course of the past year, the humanitarian situation in the Central African Republic was the subject of one parliamentary question.

Chad

The first local elections in Chad's history were held in 2012, marking the final stage in an electoral process which the EU followed closely, in particular by taking part in the discussions of the group monitoring the 2007 inter-Chadian political agreement, which came to an end when the elections were held. The EU thus reiterated, on several occasions and at several levels, that it is important to have a mechanism for consultation between the opposition and the majority to carry on the spirit of the 2007 political agreement in order to consolidate the ongoing democratisation process.

The year was also marked by some backsliding as regards fundamental freedoms, with several public figures, including ministers and journalists, being arrested and arbitrarily detained as part of a so-called clean-up campaign against corruption in the administration. The EU became actively involved in the issue, in particular in one of the most high-profile cases: national assembly member Gali Gata N'Gothé was detained on 4 March 2012 in breach of his parliamentary immunity and sentenced to one year's imprisonment by the court of first instance on 7 March on grounds of having been caught in the act of corruption (poaching). The EU made a démarche to the authorities in his case. Gali Gata N'Gothé was freed on 24 April following an appeal as a result of which the proceedings were ruled null and void.

Several human rights topics were raised in the structured political dialogue between the EU and the Chadian authorities in 2012, in particular arrest and detention conditions, Chad's cooperation with the ICC and the follow-up to the recommendations of the Committee of Inquiry into the events of 28 January to 8 February 2008. Discussions of the question continued at a number of meetings in N'Djamena and Brussels, including with the Chadian Human Rights Minister, following publication of an interim report in February. The EU considered that progress on the Commission of Inquiry's thirteen recommendations remained modest, since the judicial recommendations have yet to be implemented. The EU argued on a number of occasions that the work of the committee on the follow-up to the Commission of Inquiry was important and that it should meet and resume its discussions on the follow-up to the recommendations. The EU also continued to urge the importance of bringing on 1050 cases pending to light, including that of the disappearance of opposition activist Ibni Oumar Saleh, and ruling on them.

As regards development cooperation, the EU supports strengthening the rule of law and backs a large number of civil society organisations. Its strategic priorities for the promotion of human rights focus on combating impunity, promoting the rights of the most vulnerable groups (women, children and the disabled) and combating discrimination, reforming the security forces and ensuring respect for democratic principles (elections, good governance and support for civil society). EU action is based mainly on cooperation programmes/projects, particularly in the areas of justice and the security forces, and on political dialogue under Article 8 of the Cotonou Agreement.

Comoros

In 2012 the European Union developed action for the Union of the Comoros based on the priorities identified. The delegation issued statements on such matters as the death penalty, on World Day against the Death Penalty, and freedom of religion.

With a view to reinforcing democracy (particularly the electoral processes), funding was provided for activities implemented by the UNDP, aiming in particular to modernise the electoral register and make it secure. The EU likewise provided support for the judiciary, in particular for recasting and updating legal texts in force and making the Supreme Court operational.

The civil society network established in 2011 enables regular dialogue on the priority areas identified in the EU strategy. Information about the budget headings under which support would be made available by the EU was distributed and guidelines for a call for local proposals under heading NSA-¬LA were prepared.

The EU provided equipment enabling the new National Commission on Human Rights and Freedoms, which is tasked with promoting and protecting human rights in the Comoros, to be set up in September 2012.

Congo (Brazzaville)

The EU promoted its human rights objectives in the Congo through cooperation programmes (action to strengthen the rule of law and associations (PAREDA), grants to NGOs) and through political dialogue with the Congolese authorities, regular dialogue with human rights defenders and information and communication activities to promote the EU's human rights values.

As part of the project entitled "contribution to the establishment of the rule of law through the promotion, monitoring and protection of human rights" financed by the EU and implemented by the Observatoire Congolais des Droits de l'Homme (Congolese Human Rights Watch (OCDH)), this organisation published a report on torture on 31 October 2012 in order to raise public awareness of the extent of the problem and encourage the authorities to take measures to combat it.
As part of the same project, a report was published on 22 December 2012 denouncing prison conditions in the Republic of the Congo. EU action in this area will come to fruition in 2013 through the financing of the renovation of the detention centres in Brazzaville, Pointe-Noire (along with the central police station) and Dolisie, and through the training of prison officers.

The PAREDA project includes a wide range of activities to improve the functioning of the justice system. In 2012 this project financed an expert study of the needs of the Inspection Générale des Juridictions et Services Judiciaires (General inspectorate of courts and judicial services (IGJSJ)). Three Congolese inspectors went on a study visit to Senegal to learn from its inspection system which has a reputation for efficiency.

EU support has proved essential for the activities of the OCDH, the main human rights defender in the Republic of the Congo, which were financed by our grant under the project entitled "Contribution to the establishment of the rule of law through the promotion, monitoring and protection of human rights". The EU organised a seminar on advocacy techniques for the human rights defenders in Brazzaville on 25, 26 and 27 July 2012.

Most of the recommendations for 2012 made by the European Union election observation mission (EU EOM) were not acted upon during the parliamentary elections held in July and August 2012. As part of a multi-donor project (EU, France, USA, UNDP) entitled "Capacity building for state and non-state actors in the electoral process", the EU financed the following activities in 2012: electoral assistance to the bodies responsible for the preparation and organisation of the elections (National Electoral Commission and Directorate-General for Electoral Affairs), election observation/education by NGOs and a study of the Congolese people's perception of the elections.

Cote d'Ivoire

Côte d'Ivoire remains a fragile country still emerging from crisis. Although the general human rights situation has improved considerably compared to the more extreme periods of the post election crisis, there are still a number of serious deficiencies whose existence the government recognises. In particular, very serious human rights violations have been committed by paramilitary forces against supporters of the former President and other citizens. Impunity for the crimes alleged to have been committed by some pro-Ouattara forces during the conflict continues to be a matter of serious concern. Cooperation by the authorities with the ICC has been reluctant and needs to be reactivated.

The European Union and Côte d'Ivoire formally relaunched their political dialogue in 2012, with two meetings between the EU and Member States Ambassadors and the Foreign Minister (March and October) and one meeting between the EU and Member States Ambassadors and the Head of State (April). The EU thus has a channel for dialogue and political exchanges on human rights issues.
In June 2012, a local statement by the EU was published calling on the Ivorian politicians and media to moderate their public remarks, following an upsurge of virulent political speeches inciting violence. The EU maintained its constant dialogue with the human rights organisations. At the end of 2012, many ex-supporters of President Gbagbo who had been detained since April 2011 were conditionally released. Among them was the trade union activist Basile Mahan Gahé, on whose behalf several European trade union organisations had intervened.

The EU has maintained its policy of restrictive measures, renewed in December 2012 against 15 key Ivorian figures.

In 2012 the EU mobilised EUR 5.5 million for non-state actors and local authorities to aid reconciliation and EUR 2 million (European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights) to help combat impunity, to support victims of abuse, to reinforce the National Assembly and to provide civic education.

Activities were initiated as part of the programme supporting the judicial system (EUR 18 million) directed towards defining a sectoral reform policy, promoting access to the justice system, reducing judicial corruption and reinforcing magistrates' professionalism. A sectoral policy document for the justice system was produced, judicial and prison inspection was reinforced and six "legal clinics" were financed providing legal and judicial assistance for women and minors. Furthermore, 70 women who were victims of sexual assault received legal and psychological support in the regions most affected by the crisis and three damaged courthouses were renovated and are operational again, thus increasing access to the justice system.

National reconciliation action was also initiated in 2012 to establish a transitional justice system, mediate in property conflicts in the west, and make the media more professional and more responsible (Instrument for Stability, EUR 2.6 million). As part of this work, action was taken to promote reconciliation between the police and the general public in three municipalities in Abidjan (EUR 2.1 million), with a view to restoring the social contract between the police and the communities and to improving the police force's professionalism and its image. Budget support of EUR 115 million for State-building was approved in November 2012, incorporating indicators relating to internal security and the justice system.

Democratic Republic of Congo

In 2012, the European Union closely followed the electoral process resulting from the parliamentary and presidential elections in 2011. Following the publication of the provisional results of the parliamentary elections, the EU issued a local statement on 3 February 2012 stressing the importance of making every effort to ensure the transparency and credibility of the electoral process. On 16 February, the European Union expressed its concern at the banning of a peaceful march scheduled for that day. The EU expressed its concerns to the authorities many times regarding the allegations of electoral violence in the Report of the United Nations Joint Human Rights Office, published in March 2012. The final report of the European Union election observation mission, published on 29 March 2012, expresses serious doubts about the quality of the electoral process, which was riddled with instances of fraud and irregularities. The report contains a list of detailed recommendations for improving the quality of the electoral process in the provincial and local elections. In June 2012 the European Parliament adopted an urgent resolution on the monitoring of the DRC elections in which it condemned the violations of fundamental rights during the elections of 28 November 2011 and encouraged the Commission and Member States to make the Union's financial contribution to the electoral process in the Democratic Republic of the Congo dependent upon the effective implementation of the recommendations of the EU election observation mission.

The climate of impunity surrounding the perpetrators of human rights violations was especially condemned. The EU thus issued a local statement in June 2012 to coincide with the opening of the appeal proceedings against the alleged killers of the human rights defenders Floribert Chebeya and Fidèle Bazana.

The EU played an active role in the debates at the Human Rights Council in Geneva. The establishment of the legal framework and human rights institutions was considered a priority. In this regard, the EU noted with satisfaction the adoption of a draft law establishing an independent national human rights commission. On 4 December 2012, the EU condemned the decision by the Conseil supérieur de l'audiovisuel et de la communication (Audiovisual and Communications High Council (CSAC)) to interrupt the transmission signal of Radio Okapi in Kinshasa. The condemnation produced the desired effect as broadcasting resumed the same day.

Since mid-2012, the European Union's attention has focused particularly on the situation in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo and the resulting human rights violations. On 3 June 2012 the HR/VP issued a declaration on behalf of the European Union expressing concern regarding the events in the Kivus. In that declaration, the EU condemned the killings and other human rights violations committed by the M23 rebel movements and by the FDLR. On 12 June 2012, the HR/VP made a speech to the European Parliament in which she addressed the post-election situation and the situation in the eastern Congo. She said that she was appalled by the killings by armed groups. The Foreign Affairs Council on 25 June 2012 adopted conclusions on the situation in the eastern DRC in which it urged all players involved to protect the civilian population and called for those responsible for human rights violations to be brought to justice. On 10 July 2012, the HR/VP issued a declaration calling for an immediate end to all violence perpetrated by armed groups and expressing concern at the allegations of outside support for the M23 movement.

In response to the rebel advance in the eastern DRC, the European Union adopted two declarations in November 2012, and the Council adopted conclusions in November and December 2012. In December 2012, the European Parliament adopted an urgent resolution on the situation in the DRC relating in particular to the situation in the eastern DRC and the human rights violations.

A sanctions regime has been applied to the DRC since 2003 with a view to promoting the consolidation of peace. It comprises an arms embargo against all armed groups on DRC territory, a travel ban on individuals, and the freezing of the assets of entities and individuals subject to restrictive measures. These measures have been fully implemented by the European Union.

As part of the political dialogue and development cooperation, the EU supports strengthening the rule of law and combating impunity in the DRC. In particular, this support takes the form of ambitious programmes in the justice sector which aim to promote access to the justice system and support those seeking justice, as well as the human rights components of the EUSEC and EUPOL missions.

The European Union supports a large number of Congolese civil society organisations. More than 30 projects are currently financed by the EU under a number of headings, mobilising more than EUR 20 million. They cover such matters as sexual assault, gender, the media, the protection of human rights defenders, the protection of minors, eliminating torture and supporting the electoral process.

The EU is particularly active in the campaign against sexual assault and gender-based violence through humanitarian and cooperation programmes supporting the victims. In 2012, the Commission launched a special initiative on the issue of gender-based violence which has a budget of EUR 20 million to and which will provide support for enhancing women's role at national level.

Djibouti

In 2012, the European Union developed action for Djibouti specifically for vulnerable groups such as children, women and migrants. Other priorities identified include support for combating corruption, for the reform of the juvenile justice system and for creating a space for the expression of public opinion. In an effort to respond to the most urgent needs expressed by Djiboutian associations, the European Union has provided support in Djibouti for women in a highly precarious social situation: disabled women, refugees, AIDS sufferers, women in prison, etc. This action to combat violations of vulnerable women's rights is being carried out by the Djiboutian Association for the Equilibrium and Promotion of the Family and is intended to inform the most disadvantaged women about their rights and available remedies and to raise awareness of gender based violence.

Equatorial Guinea

In 2012, the European Union took action to deal with the case of Dr Wenceslao Mansogo Alo, a doctor responsible for human rights in the opposition party, *Convergencia Para la Democracia Social* (CPDS), who was arrested in February on grounds of medical negligence. He was visited in prison and the EU demanded that his trial take place according to the proper procedure and within a reasonable period. That was done, yet he was sentenced to three years in prison on 7 May 2012, but he was pardoned by President Obiang on 5 June 2012. The judicial sector in Equatorial Guinea nevertheless remains deficient, particularly as regards its independence.

The European Union broached these more general issues with the authorities, as well as the issue of implementing the changes brought about by the new Constitution, the Universal Periodic Review and the next electoral cycle. This was done within the framework of high-level, but informal, dialogues, there having been no structured political dialogue since 2009.

The country does not receive funding from the 10th EDF because it has not ratified the revised Cotonou Agreement (reservation on the clause relating to the ICC). Only one project is progress and it is close to completion: the construction of a civil society centre.

Eritrea

The EU continued to express strong concern about violations by Eritrea of human rights obligations and urged the Government, on numerous occasions, to take visible steps to improve the situation. In September 2012 the High Representative/Vice President issued a declaration on behalf of the EU on political prisoners in Eritrea on the 11th anniversary of their detention. The EU called on the Government to release, unconditionally, the group of senior government officials arbitrarily detained and denied their rights since 2001 after openly criticising President Isaias Afwerki.

In addition, concern has been raised about the fate of detained journalists and prisoners of conscience incarcerated for their political and religious beliefs. Among others, the EU called on the Eritrean authorities to release Dawit Isaak, a journalist of dual Eritrean-Swedish nationality held incommunicado in detention since 2001, as well as all other imprisoned journalists. The EU repeated requests to provide information and to grant access to them.

Freedom of expression, freedom of religion and application of the rule of law, including property rights, remain among the areas of concern. The EU has consistently expressed its concern regarding violations of these rights. In 2012 the EU also voiced concerns with the authorities about the problem of migration and human trafficking in the Horn of Africa. The matter was again highlighted in a resolution by the European Parliament. The EU also urged the Eritrean authorities to improve their co-operation with the UN human rights system, including with the new UN Special Rapporteur on the human rights situation in Eritrea, and to live up with the commitments under the UN Universal Periodic Review.

Ethiopia

Respect of human rights and in particular political and civil rights in Ethiopia remain an issue of concern for the EU. On the basis of the Anti-Terrorism Proclamation in 2012 further arrests and trials of journalists, opposition party members and religious leaders have been initiated by the Ethiopian authorities. Many of these trials have already been concluded or are being appealed and the result has often been long prison sentences. The EU has questions about the quality of the evidence given and the due respect of procedures applied in these cases. The EU is engaged with the Ethiopian Government in a regular dialogue on these issues. The EU is also ensuring systematic monitoring of the trials through effective coordination and burden sharing amongst EU MS and the EU Delegation.

In October 2012 the EU's concern about death penalty in Ethiopia was raised with the Government. In addition, an EU Member State on the ground organised a public event to promote the abolition of death penalty on the African continent.

The new guidelines related to the Charities and Societies Proclamation adopted in 2011 have impacted severely on civil society organisations' operations. A tripartite dialogue between the Government of Ethiopia, civil society and donors has been established and aims at mitigating some of the challenges facing civil society organisations. The EU is co-chair of this dialogue mechanism. The EU's Civil Society Fund, which is considered a local fund, is providing support to CSOs working on governance and human rights issues.

A number of EU MS, as well as the EU Delegation, also participated in monitoring missions on the implementation of the government's villagisation programme in remote areas of Ethiopia. There have been a number of reports by human rights organisations alleging serious abuses in connection with the programme. While the missions conducted found no evidence for systematic human rights abuses, concern remains about the pace and scale of the programme. Finally, whilst the EU welcomes the increasing role the Ethiopian Human Rights Commission plays, the body still needs to become independent from the Government.

Gabon

The goals of the European Union on human rights and democracy in the Gabonese Republic address the main concerns and challenges identified in this context. In particular, they relate to conditions of detention, the persistence of ritual crimes and impunity in relation to them, women's rights, trafficking in human beings, and the transparency and inclusivity of the electoral process. To a lesser extent, problems also exist with regard to delays in the judicial system, the large number of persons held in provisional detention, pressure exerted on the media and on journalists, corruption, and discrimination against African immigrants and against indigenous communities. However, the human rights situation in Gabon is much better than in many other countries in the region.

The Gabonese Republic underwent a Universal Periodic Review by the UN Human Rights Council in October 2012. The recommendations made as a result cover the EU concerns listed above, namely conditions of detention, children's rights, ritual crimes, women's rights, trafficking in human beings, non-discrimination and freedom of expression.

These issues are also discussed with the national authorities at political dialogue meetings between the European Union and the Gabonese Republic.

At local level, the European Union delegation has put in place a structured dialogue with civil society organisations and human rights organisations. There have also been regular meetings with representatives of the relevant official bodies (National Human Rights Commission, government departments).

Moreover, since 2012 the Gabonese Republic has been benefiting for the first time from a thematic programme for non-state actors and local authorities in development amounting to EUR 2.5 million. Another objective of the action taken under this programme is to build capacity and help to structure non-state actors and civil society organisations in Gabon.

In 2012, only one parliamentary question relating to Gabon concerned human rights – the continued occurrence of ritual crimes and the measures taken by the Gabonese authorities to identify and prosecute the suspects.

Gambia

The EU continued to address the human rights issues in The Gambia in its political dialogue with the authorities and sought the support of regional actors, such as the African Union, as well as through concrete development projects. The death penalty, freedom of media, support to civil society and human rights defenders (HRDs), prison and detention facility conditions, violence against women and LGBTI Rights were among the EU's priority issues in the country.

During the year, the EU supported civil society, working on governance and human rights issues, in particular women's rights. The EU funded a number of projects, including on the abolition of Female Genital Mutilation (€45,000), on the promotion of gender equality and the increase of women's representation in local councils (€90,000), and on the improvement of women's livelihoods (€45,000). In its 10th EDF Support to Governance Programme and its media component, the EU included gender equality issues in the development of training curricula and materials for the professionals of the media sector and selected women as a target group for the training of professionals /new journalists.

In August, in response to the execution of nine death-row prisoners after a 27 year de facto moratorium on the death penalty, a statement by the HRVP was issued condemning the executions, demanding their immediate halt and recalling the Gambia's international commitments. Additionally, following a seriously deteriorating human rights and rule of law situation, which included many incidences of intimidation of journalists and the unlawful closures of newspapers and radio stations, the EU decided to proceed to intensified political dialogue under Art. 8 of the Cotonou Agreement. The talks were due to take place in early 2013.

The EU deplored discrimination against LGBTI persons in a meeting with the authorities in May and within its regular political dialogue in June. In a local statement issued in December, the EU expressed its serious concern over the conditions of the arbitrary detention of Imam Baba Leigh, a prominent religious leader, whose whereabouts remained unknown at year end.

Ghana

The EU together with EU member states (Denmark and the UK) supported the activities of the constitutional review process (research, consultations at the district, national level, consolidation of final report) carried out by the Constitution Review Commission through a basket fund. The government White Paper on the Review adopted in June 2012 agreed with some of the recommendations made by the Constitution Review Commission in the field of Human Rights, such as de jure abolition of the death penalty, the effective implementation of affirmative action policies towards women, children, elderly and disabled people, the implementation of economic and social rights and better access to justice. However, contrary to the proposal from the Constitution Review Commission, the White Paper did not include a clear reinforcement of the legislature nor of the regional powers.

Ghana was reviewed under the second cycle of the Universal Periodic Review on 23October 2012. The UN Human Rights Council noted several positive achievements since the 2008 review, such as the establishment of the Constitution Review Commission, the ratification of the convention of the rights of persons with disabilities (CRPD), as well as the establishment of the Domestic Violence Secretariat. However, it raised concerns and made recommendations about access to education, particularly regarding girls, violence against women, including domestic violence and Female Genital Mutilation, as well as discrimination against LGBTI persons. Ghana accepted 123 of the 148 recommendations received.

In May the EU organised a meeting to mark International day against homophobia. The meeting was attended by Ghanaian human rights defenders and Development Partners. The Human Rights Defenders shared their experiences in defending LGBTI rights in Ghana. This meeting was opportune in light of the public debate on LGBTI rights following publicity of a proposed conference on LGBTI in Ghana, which was widely condemned by religious groups and many members of the public who had expressed intolerance for LGBTI persons and called on the government to criminalize them. It was alleged that some LGBTI persons were openly persecuted. The meeting assured the human rights defenders of the support of the EU and other Development partners.

In June, the EU Delegation paid a working visit to one of the Juvenile Correctional Centres to observe the International day of the Child. Statements were delivered by both the EU Head of Delegation and the Ambassador of the Royal Netherlands embassy highlighting the plight of children in Ghana and providing words of encouragement to the youth in the correctional centre. There was adequate media coverage of this event.

Based on the interactions with human rights advocates, the EU Delegation allocated €600,000 to support Child Rights under the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights' in the 2012 and 2013 budget.

Ghana's 2012 elections held on 7 December were conducted under conditions respectful of internationally recognised electoral rights and were given a generally positive assessment by international observers. The EU deployed an Electoral Expert Mission in Ghana from 23 November until 24 December The overall stability of the country was maintained, with no major violent outbreaks recorded, although the losing party challenged the results in the Supreme Court at the end of the year. During the review period for this Report, the Court had not yet ruled on the petition of the opposition. The EU support to the elections was commended by the Ghanaian government. It consisted of the financing of the three independent institutions involved in the electoral process (the Electoral Commission, the National Commission for Civic Education and the National Media Commission). In addition, EU supported projects implemented by CSO's to increase the participation of women in politics, which is still lagging behind in spite of an encouraging rise in the number of women elected in the new Parliament, from 19 to 30 seats.

Guinea

Following the military coup d'état on 23 December 2008, the EU suspended its cooperation with Guinea and adopted a roadmap for the return to democracy and the rule of law. Although there has been some progress – in particular concerning the procedure to prepare for parliamentary elections, which have been significantly delayed – these measures remain in force. Through the political dialogue provided for in Article 96 of the ACP-EU Partnership Agreement, the EU has pressed for free and transparent parliamentary elections to be held, which would complete the transition to democracy and permit full resumption of cooperation with Guinea. The fact that parliamentary elections have been scheduled for 12 May 2013 meant that the EU was able sign the cooperation documents under the 10th EDF and to implement programmes providing direct support for the population, including one programme to support civil society amounting to EUR 6 million. However, 80% of the 10th EDF funds remain subject to the holding of free and transparent elections, the date for which has, in the meantime, been postponed yet again. The EU has released funds to support elections in order to safeguard the electoral process and thus contribute to a calm political atmosphere.

Impunity remains a major concern. The EU has continued to give support of a judicial nature to human rights defenders so that they can help victims of human rights abuses to organise and to bring civil action, and to support them throughout the investigative process up to the trial. Such support originally focused on the events of September 2009 but was extended in 2012 to include other gross violations of human rights committed in 2007 and 2010. The other measures adopted by the EU in response to the massacre in September 2009 remain in force: individual sanctions against five alleged perpetrators identified by a UN Commission of Inquiry, two of whom continue to hold senior positions in the Guinean public administration, and also an arms embargo. The embargo was partially relaxed in the light of progress made in security sector reform and in re establishing democratic control over the security forces.

At the end of 2012, the EU provided technical assistance for incorporating the Rome Statute in national law. In addition, the EU urged an amendment of the legal framework for military justice, which currently allows immunity from civil proceedings for general offences committed by military personnel.

The EU and Unicef made a concerted effort to press Guinea to ratify the two Optional Protocols to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the first on the involvement of children in armed conflict, and the second on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography. The instruments of ratification were sent to the United Nations in April 2012.

Guinea-Bissau

The human rights situation in Guinea-Bissau in 2012 worsened due the tensions arising from the anticipated Presidential elections, the military coup d'état of 12 April and, most recently, an armed attack on military barracks on 21 October.

After the first round of the Presidential elections, the High Representative/Vice President urged authorities twice to assume their responsibilities and ensure the security of all citizens, emphasizing the importance of the Armed Forces' loyalty to the Constitution and to the elected government.

The High Representative/Vice President condemned the coup upon its perpetration, requesting the return of the legitimate government and the completion of the electoral process. Underscoring the ongoing suspension of most of the EU aid and the redeployment of the remaining to directly assist the population, she ruled out any possible support for the illegitimate government.

The Council conclusions of 23 April clarified that neither self-appointed transitional institutions would be recognised, nor any arrangement allowing the armed forces to continue to jeopardize or control the civilian powers. Restrictive measures against individuals continuing to engage in, or provide support for, acts that threaten the peace, security and stability of Guinea-Bissau were adopted on 3 May, imposing a ban from entering the EU and an asset freeze on six persons. 15 persons were added thereafter, and relevant provisions of the Security Council Resolution 2048 were incorporated into EU law.

On 12 June the EP strongly condemned the coup, demanding the unconditional release of those illegally detained, an end to violence and intimidation and the full restoration and guarantee of fundamental freedoms.

On 16 July the EU extended the application of the measures under Article 96 of the Cotonou Agreement, as the essential elements of this Agreement continue to be violated and the deteriorating situation in the country hinders the respect for human rights, democratic principles or the rule of law.

The human rights clause of the protocol to the Fisheries Partnership Agreement has not been invoked because the protocol expired on 15 June. Negotiations over the adoption of a new protocol have been suspended until restoration of the constitutional order.

In 2012, four projects were funded through EIDHR for a total amount of EUR 1 200 000, aiming at reinforcing the respect of human rights of vulnerable groups (women, children, detainees). In acknowledgment of its key role for a functioning democracy, the EU continued to support the civil society of Guinea-Bissau through the European Development Fund. In the wake of the violent actions which followed the coup of 12 April and the armed attack of 21 October, the EU Delegation in Bissau sheltered a number of members of the legitimate overthrown government and political opponents fearing for their physical integrity or their lives.

Kenya

Supporting the implementation of the new Constitution which came into force in August 2010 remained the main priority for the EU in Kenya in 2012 not least in view of the protection and promotion of human rights. The Constitution includes a progressive Bill of Rights and also gives impetus to strengthen democracy and the rule of law. In all political contacts with the Kenyan authorities, the implementation of the Constitution was a key issue. Thus the EU underlined the importance of credible, transparent and peaceful elections taking place in 2013. The EU took active part in efforts by the international community to support the preparations of the elections.

Impunity remained a great concern and was regularly raised by the EU with the Government of Kenya and in public messaging. The EU as a staunch supporter of the ICC encouraged the Government of Kenya to fully cooperate with the Court in regard to the Kenyan cases. The EU also maintained political pressure on the Kenyan Government to promote police reform with a view to having peaceful general elections and ending extrajudicial killings. Important steps were the establishment of the Independent Police Oversight Authority and the National Police Service Commission as well as appointment of the Inspector General. Judicial reforms also showed significant progress.

The EU and EU Member States also strongly supported Human Rights Defenders (HRDs). The EU took active steps to implement the updated HRD guidelines by maintaining contacts with human rights defenders, fostering their public recognition, coordinating EU actions and promoting regular exchange of information. The EU Heads of Mission made a public statement on the violence and killings in Tana Delta and went on a fact finding mission. In addition, a continuous dialogue with civil society organizations, the Parliament and Independent Commissions was maintained in 2012. On Human Rights Day, the EU issued an op-ed and EU Heads of Mission planned a prison visit on the "Day against the Death Penalty". They were however refused entry at the last minute by the prison authorities.

Lesotho

Lesotho enjoys a stable political environment. The country went to the polls on in May 2012 to elect a new Parliament. The elections were held in an orderly, efficient and peaceful manner. The Delegation of the European Union in Maseru co-coordinated the monitoring of these elections by a team of 35 persons from different EU Member States.

Lesotho's governance, rule of law and human rights situation is relatively satisfactory to continental and regional practices. However, challenges remain in a number of areas such as discrimination against women or access to justice for vulnerable groups.

In 2012, the EU provided support to the justice sector, in particular on work to improve the case management system. A technical assistance expert team was recruited and numerous coordination meetings between the office of the Registrar/Chief Justice, the NAO and the EU Delegation took place prior to the arrival of the experts.

In addition, in 2012 the EU gave support to the decentralisation of government. To this end, in October 2012 an 8 million EURO contribution agreement was signed to support capacity-building at central and local levels and the creation of a fund to support the Government in delivering services. At the same time, a call for proposals for approximately EUR 3 million was launched for civil society organisations to supplying services and build capacity at local level.

In terms of economic and social rights, support to social protection, in particular for orphans and vulnerable children has been provided by the EU. In January 2012, the EU signed a second phase social protection intervention in favour of orphans and vulnerable children. A EUR 9.8 million contribution agreement has been signed with UNICEF which is working closely to build the capacity of the Ministry of Social Development and improve the design of the cash grant programme.

Liberia

Regular political dialogue between the EU and Liberia, as provided for in article 8 of the Cotonou agreement, was officially launched in 2012 by a high level meeting of the EEAS Managing Director for Africa, Nicholas Westcott with the President of Liberia, Ellen Johnson Sirleaf. National reconciliation, accountability, the enactment of the International Criminal Court Convention into domestic law and the death penalty were all discussed in the political dialogue.

In 2012, the EU continued its support to the electoral cycle in Liberia, as part of the 7.000.000 EUR committed in 2010, through technical assistance aimed at strengthening the capacity of national electoral bodies.

The EU also closely monitored an emerging anti-homosexual movement which promotes legal amendments prohibiting same-sex marriage and homosexual acts. In this context, the EU engaged in dialogue with human rights defenders advocating gay rights.

The European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR) funded two initiatives in support of the Liberian Civil Society's capacity to promote and protect Human Rights. A project of 300.000 EUR aims to support civil society actions in promoting national reconciliation and social cohesion, and the identification of locally-owned measures for conflict mitigation and resolution. An additional 300.000 EUR were made available to support the dialogue between State and Non-State stakeholders in the human rights field, the capacity of the Independent National Commission on Human Rights to coordinate human rights protection at county level, and the human rights reporting capacity of civil society.

In order to better coordinate the EU's work to promote gender equality and women's rights in Liberia and in accordance with the EU Gender Action Plan, Sweden was nominated as the lead donor on this issue.

The EU continued its support to education (2.000.000 EUR disbursed) which helped maintain the positive trend concerning children's enrolment at school, and progress towards the MDG target of achieving gender parity in primary education.

To respond to the very high rates of maternal mortality in Liberia and as part of the EU's support to the health sector, the EU committed 57 million EUR to continue providing technical assistance and training to support family planning services, emergency obstetric care and training of birth attendants.

Madagascar

Madagascar has been subject to measures under Article 96 of the Cotonou Agreement since June 2010 following an unconstitutional transfer of power in March 2009 and a violation of the essential elements set out in the Cotonou Agreement (human rights, democratic principles and the rule of law). The resumption of cooperation is dependent on the holding of transparent, free and credible elections. Presidential and parliamentary elections are scheduled for July 2013. The EU is providing political and financial support for the electoral process to end the crisis. The political dialogue between the Malagasy authorities and the EU was resumed in November 2012 and an allocation of EUR 17 million was granted to support the electoral process.

Madagascar underwent a Universal Periodic Review in 2010. Of the 84 recommendations made by Member States of the Human Rights Council, 65 were accepted by the Malagasy authorities. A plan to put the recommendations into operation was adopted by the authorities in March 2012, relating to such matters as accession to international instruments and legislative reform, and strengthening the national system of protection for human rights. The 2012 call for proposals by the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR) focused on three priorities: promoting respect for human rights in the administration of justice, promoting the rights of the child, and promoting women's rights.

The rights of the child were mainly raised bilaterally by Member States active in the education sector. Children's rights were also one of the objectives in the above-mentioned call for proposals under the EIDHR CBSS (Country-Based Support Schemes) launched in October. Through the Democratic Governance Programme, the EU also supported the translation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child into three local languages and conducted sensitisation activities.

Malawi

In 2012 the new Presidency of Joyce Banda brought about changes concerning democracy and human rights in Malawi. For example, some restrictive laws have been repealed and there have been initiatives to review the laws that criminalise homosexuality. Moreover, the current political leadership has reinforced its dialogue with the civil society.

The promotion of human rights and democratisation in Malawi remained high on the EU agenda in 2012. The EU engaged in political dialogue and advocacy with the Government and supported human rights through its development cooperation.

The EU, alongside Member States represented in Malawi have proactively raised freedom of expression and media freedom in its political dialogue with the Government. -In addition, freedom of expression with particular emphasis on the media is one of the objectives of the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Right Country Based Support Scheme (EIDHR CBSS) that was launched in Malawi in October 2012.

The EU Delegation also organised roundtable discussions on the occasion of the 2012 International Human Rights Day which was devoted to the issue of political participation.

Malawi was the first country to receive an EU Elections Observation Follow-up mission in December 2012. The mission gave a good opportunity for dialogue with stakeholders on the preparations for credible elections in 2014. In order to assist the country with the preparation of the 2014 elections, the EU provided financial and technical assistance to the Malawi Electoral Commission (MEC) through the Democratic Governance Programme

Minority issues, and particularly the rights of LGBTI, also featured in the political dialogue and bilateral discussions with President Joyce Banda, as well as with the Minister of Justice.

On gender equality, in May 2012, the EU signed a Contribution Agreement with the UN Population Fund to implement a programme to support the Government of Malawi to reduce gender inequalities in accessing productive resources and development opportunities. The EU's contribution to this programme is EUR10.9 M. In addition, the EU also participated in the Development Assistance Group on Gender (DAGG) which is a forum for dialogue on gender equality and which brings together development partners, civil society and the Government of Malawi.

The rights of the child were mainly raised bilaterally by Member States active in the education sector. The promotion of children's rights was also one of the objectives in the above-mentioned call for proposals under the EIDHR CBSS launched in October. Through the Democratic Governance Programme, the EU also supported the translation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child into three local languages and conducted sensitization activities.

Mali

The coup d'état on 22 March 2012 brought to an abrupt halt all institutional reforms, the electoral process and the Malian democratic model that had been in place since 1992. It led to the establishment of a government of national union under Article 36 of the Constitution of Mali[6] and Article 6 of the Framework Agreement signed by the relevant stakeholders[7]. It should be noted that the events of 2012 were the result of a multifaceted challenge to the Malian democratic "model" and highlight the urgent need for reform of the mode of governance at political, administrative economic levels. The crisis situation that has existed in Mali since January 2012 has had a direct and significant impact on the preservation and consolidation of achievements with regard to respect for and enjoyment of human rights in Mali, as well as on Mali's ability to promote and protect human rights. A large number of breaches of basic human rights were committed following the coup d'état of 22 March and the unsuccessful counter-coup on 30 April 2012. In the north, the strict application of Sharia by armed groups has led to numerous acts of violence.

The occupation of the north of the country by armed groups has made any intervention or any support for NGOs in the area of human rights impossible, largely because it has not been possible to guarantee the security of those working on these issues.

However, the delegation has been closely monitoring the human rights situation in Mali. For example, meetings were held with the civil society organisations (CSOs) from the north. Although the local strategy for human rights would need to be brought up to date, the priorities it identified are still relevant, and it has been possible to continue the measures undertaken under it.

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6 "*In the event of the office of the President of the Republic becoming vacant for whatever reason or due to an absolute and permanent impediment … the functions of the President of the Republic shall be exercised by the President of the National Assembly.*"

7 "*establishment of transitional bodies responsible for steering the transitional process until a presidential election is held on the basis of an electoral register that has been duly revised and accepted by all*".

Furthermore, throughout 2012 serious consideration has been given to measures which could be launched or supported as soon as the north becomes accessible. Within the framework of the EIDHR, guidelines have been drawn up, setting the following priorities: (i) protection of human rights and response to violations of human rights for the entire territory of Mali, and (ii) response to the conflict in the north of Mali. Discussions with the CSOs in a position to take measures in these areas have been held or are still ongoing.

As part of the Civil Society Support Programme (PASOC), comprehensive consideration was given to supporting the Malian CSOs in measures relating in particular to the promotion of and respect for human rights, and to adapting the financing agreement to new needs and requirements.

Upstream of the implementation of our support programme for the electoral process, the EU financed an audit of the two registers that could potentially be used as an electoral register. This measure was of paramount importance and constitutes an essential precondition for launching an electoral process on a consensual and credible basis.

In the context of the end-of-term review and the redistribution of funds from the 10th EDF for Mali, significant consideration was given to measures which could be launched or maintained as soon as the north becomes accessible and as soon as the government adopts the roadmap for transition. A programme of mediation and conflict resolution is in the process of identification, with a view to contributing to the establishment of lasting peace in Mali.

Programmes to support the return to constitutional order and to strengthen the rule of law are also in preparation: a programme of support for the electoral process, and the establishment of a State Building Contract.

The political discussions to be conducted by the EU Delegation with all of the Malian authorities should, of course, also be borne in mind.

Mauritania

The main issues in the human rights field concern the persistence of disguised forms of slavery, domestic and sexual violence against women, and unacceptable conditions of detention and individual cases of torture. The death penalty remains legal and is pronounced. However, Mauritania applies a *de facto* moratorium since 1987. A particular concern is the wide range of crimes punishable by death penalty including activities related to the rights of LGBTI. These problems are compounded by an inefficient and unreliable justice system and weak political will to engage in meaningful reforms. Two detainees died in prison in 2012, apparently after having been beaten by guards. These cases are under investigation but so far no official information has been provided. Mauritania has recently (October 2012) ratified the "Optional Protocol to the convention against Torture" (OPCAT).

Ensuring credible elections remains a challenge despite the establishment of the Independent National Election Commission (CENI). Legislative and municipal elections should have been held in autumn 2011. No date has been announced yet but there are indications they may take place in 2013. The on-going identity card reform and electoral registration processes were initially criticized as prejudiced against the black population, though the situation is perceived to have improved in 2012.)

European Parliament questions in 2012 underlined these concerns, focusing on the discriminatory aspects of the enrolment process against black Mauritanians and the situation of human rights defenders. The cases of Mr Dadde, former Human Rights Commissioner detained in custody without trial on corruption allegation charges and Mr Biram, anti-slavery activist charged with threatening state security after having burned religious books that in his view condoned slavery, are illustrative of the failure of the authorities to uphold the basic legal rights of these detainees. Both have however been provisionally released. The EP did not issue resolutions on Mauritania in 2012. The EU-Mauritania fisheries agreement which the EP has not yet ratified provides for the possibility of suspension in case of human rights violations.

In 2012, the EU Delegation strongly supported two major NGOs (beneficiaries of EIDHR grants) whose commitment resulted in a proposal of draft legislation to prevent violence against women and girls. The proposal is now being submitted to the relevant authorities for discussion and adoption by the Parliament.

Following the ratification of the OPCAT, the EU Delegation and the French Embassy provided the National Human rights Commission with financial and logistical support to hold a conference on the implementation of the OPCAT in Nouakchott in December.

At the operational level, several activities financed by the 9th EDF were undertaken in the justice sector. For example, the EU supported a national survey on perceptions of justice, the organisation of 6 commissions to improve and modernise legislation in 6 domains, and the creation of a public database including all the legislation published in the Official Journal. In addition, a database for managing prison populations, a film for prison guards and prisoners to improve treatment and conditions, and a series of trainings aimed at all justice actors (judges, clerks, civil society, media, members of parliament) were also funded.

Politically, EU approaches requesting Mauritanian authorities to not vote against a moratorium on the death penalty at the UNGA yielded a positive result as Mauritania after a first negative vote at the Third Committee finally abstained at the plenary session in December 2012. In addition, several letters were sent to authorities in order to draw attention to problems of lack of dynamism of reforms. Furthermore, the issue of elections was raised in regular political dialogue meetings. In addition, human rights issues are regularly raised in the context of the official political dialogue with the government and on other bilateral occasions.

Mauritius

In 2012 the main forum for the active EU promotion of human rights, democracy and rule of law was through Political Dialogue with the Government of Mauritius and meetings with the Minister of Foreign Affairs, the Speaker of Parliament, opposition leaders, representatives of the private sector and Human Rights Defenders.

A high-level dialogue was undertaken to support Mauritius in its fight against piracy and in particular on prosecution of the suspected pirates in Mauritius. The EU also provided financial support to Mauritius after the proclamation of the "Piracy & Maritime Violence Bill" and of the agreement between the EU and Mauritius on the conditions of transfer of suspected pirates from the EU's CSDP mission (EUNAVFOR ATALANTA) to Mauritius.

In line with human rights priorities to improve prison conditions, the EU, through UNODC, financed renovation works in a wing of one prison and assisted Mauritius in the preparation of its legal and judicial system for the trial and detention of suspected pirates. In addition, the EU Delegation launched a call for proposals in September 2012 for actions targeting women and children in distress.

Mozambique

In 2012, the EU focused on the following main priorities: better rule of law enforcement, freedom of expression and access to information, human rights defenders, Rome Statute, Universal Periodic Review recommendations and Paris Principles.

EU advocated for a Mozambican justice system not subject to political influence or corruption, for better detention conditions and the end of impunity regarding human rights violations by law enforcement bodies and prison guards. Political dialogue and financial support provided to the Ministries of Justice and Interior through infrastructure brought some concrete results and contributed to the adoption of important reforms (penitentiary services, prison personnel statute).

A € 9million support programme for the rule of law was signed with the authorities during the visit of European Commission President Barroso in July 2012. A project funded under the EIDHR supported the participation of civil society in electoral reform, under the coordination of the Konrad Adenauer Foundation and of the national Electoral Observatory (NGO platform). A contribution from civil society was drafted and handed over to the Parliament. EU also lobbied at political level (Parliamentary benches and relevant committee) for a comprehensive electoral reform.

The EU continued to call for the adoption of a bill on access to information and strongly encouraged the authorities to improve transparency on economic governance. The accession of Mozambique to the EITI (Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative) compliant status was one of the major steps forward of 2012.

The EU also continued to lobby at a high level for the registration of the LGBTI organisation LAMBDA (blocked since 2008). Projects were funded to enhance the capacity and protection of journalists and help communities raise their voice (EIDHR).

In addition, the EU appointed an EU Liaison Officer for HRDs. On 10 December, a dialogue was organised with Human Rights Defenders on the topic of Transparency and Access to Information.

Financial, technical and political support was provided to a large number of civil society organisations and platforms working on various human rights components. Besides core funding provided by Member States, the EU Delegation used the EIDHR Country Based Support Scheme to support 9 projects in various fields. The EU pressed the Government of Mozambique to issue a standing invitation to the UN Special Rapporteurs on human rights and for a reply to request from the UN Special Rapporteur on Extrajudicial Killings.

The EU continued to urge the Government and Parliament and to support efforts by the Bar Association for the ratification of the Rome Statute, urging that the opportunity given by the constitutional revision underway in 2012 be seized to clear legal obstacles.

In 2012, the EU attended and supported milestone events related to the implementation of the recommendations endorsed during the 2011 UPR. The UK provided support for the preparation by the Ministry of Justice of the action plan and progress report.

Namibia

The Delegation's main priority on human rights in Namibia is the consolidation of democratic processes and institutions, as well as the promotion of political participation and pluralism. In 2012, the EU Delegation addressed this priority through the launching of the EDF Parliamentary Support Programme and through regular meetings between the EU Human Rights Working Group and Namibian human rights defenders.

In 2012 the Office of the Ombudsman commissioned, with EU support, a comprehensive baseline survey on human rights in Namibia. The baseline study's primary objective is to contribute to the formulation of the National Human Rights Action Plan (NHRAP) which may be published at the end of 2013.

Given the high rates of gender-based violence in Namibia, the promotion of women's rights is an important EU objective in the country. The EU is currently providing support to a project implemented by Women's Action for Development and the Konrad Adenauer Stiftung to raise awareness on gender equality and women's rights. In 2012, the EU Delegation, in partnership with civil society, and with active participation by the Namibian Ministry of Gender Equality and Child Welfare, hosted a Gender workshop on information sharing for strengthening partnerships, in order to better implement the National Gender Policy.

Addressing child abuse and neglect as a consequence of the high prevalence of HIV/AIDS in the country is an important priority for the EU. In 2012, the EU financed initiatives to empower children through education, and to support hearing impaired children, their families and communities. In addition, the EU supported a project on child rights with Terre des Hommes, an organisation that aims to improve the living conditions for marginalised and vulnerable children and adolescents living in the informal settlements of Katutura.

In Namibia, the EU also aims to promote the protection of minorities, such as indigenous populations, including the San people. The EU is supporting a project to improve access to education for San children and which is implemented by the Working Group on Indigenous Minorities of Southern Africa (WIMSA).

The Caprivi Treason Trial continues to stain Namibia's human rights record. 108 detainees remain in custody since 2003 under accusations of treason and conspiracy to secede the Caprivi region. The toll of those dead in prison was increased by one, bringing the total number to 22. In 2012, the EU issued a Local Statement calling for a quick end to the trial.

At the EU-Namibia Political dialogue meeting, and in regular meetings with the government, the EU raised several human rights issues of EU concern such as the delayed passing of the Child Care and Protection Bill and the International Criminal Court Implementation Bill.

Niger

Since the newly elected authorities came to power in April 2011, Niger has remained committed to guaranteeing respect for democratic principles and fundamental rights. In this context, Niger's ranking in the press freedom index of Reporters without Borders has gone up from 104th to 29th. No systematic violation of citizens' fundamental rights was observed during the period under review. The EU's action to promote respect for human rights thus took place in conditions which were favourable on the whole.

One of the EU's priorities in its action on human rights has been the promotion of respect for democratic principles and the rule of law. Within the framework of the Civil Society Support Programme (PASOC II), a call for proposals was published in October 2012 for the implementation of measures to promote fundamental human rights and citizenship rights in the regions of Agadez, Maradi, Tahoua and Zinder. This call for proposals is primarily aimed at grassroots community organisations.

The implementation of the 14 grant contracts financed under the thematic programme "Non-State Actors and Local Authorities" also began in January 2012. These projects, which are being carried out by CSOs and by Nigerien and European local authorities, are aimed at improving governance (civic accountability of public action, capacity-building of civil society) and/or conflict prevention and managements.

With regard to improving the functioning of the judicial system, the holding of the "Stakeholder conference on justice" in November 2012 was an important milestone, offering an opportunity to take stock of the current state of affairs and establish a consensus on the reforms to be undertaken in this area. The discussion was very open and free. The EU will support some of the planned reforms through the Support Programme for Justice and the Rule of Law (PAJED II).

Protection of women and children has constituted a third area of assistance to Niger in 2012; Unicef has begun implementing the civil status part of the programme to support the development of a national statistics system for the promotion of governance and the monitoring/evaluation of poverty (PASTAGEP). One of the results expected is an increase in the rate of birth registration, which is currently no more than 30 %. The tools currently being developed to raise awareness among the population will help increase demand for registration services.

Nigeria

The situation of human rights in Nigeria continues to be worrying, with grave violations including extra judicial executions and widespread use of torture, enforced disappearances, terrorist attacks and violations of the rights of women and children. The EU and Nigeria are working in partnership to address those capital problems.

The third session of the local informal EU-Nigeria human rights dialogue took place in February 2012. It was followed by a Senior Officials meeting and the EU-Nigeria Ministerial meeting, where human rights were also covered. Human rights were also discussed during the two visits of the EU Counter-terrorism coordinator, respectively in February and December 2012. A meeting with the Chair of the human rights Committees of the House of Representatives was held in November to discuss the EU's priorities in the field of human rights and to convey the EU's position on the Same Sex Marriage Bill (SSMB). A meeting was organised with the Chair of the Governing Council of the National Human Rights commission, in March 2012. He was also invited to address the EU local working group on human rights, to present his priorities. Contacts were maintained throughout the year.

During the reporting period, seven local EU working groups on human rights took place. Three ad hoc meetings of the EU Political Counsellors were held on human rights-related issues (International justice, right to adequate housing, human rights and counter-terrorism). EU Heads of Missions meetings were organised with, respectively, the Prosecutor of the ICC and the Secretary General of Amnesty International, in July and October 2012.

Eight different human rights organisations were invited to address the EU local working groups. A yearly consultation meeting with human rights organisations was organised in February 2012 (hosted by Sweden). In August 2012, the EU Delegation focal point on human rights visited Lagos, where meetings were held with civil society organisations, including those focusing on police reform, women rights and social and economic rights. Field visits took place in Makoko (Lagos) and Mpape (Abuja), two areas where house evictions were planned.. The focal point also attended an ad hoc consultation meeting (hosted by UK) with LGBTI activists in November 2012, following the adoption by the House of Representatives, in its second reading, of the SSMB. Following field visits by the EU Delegation in Kaduna and Jos, a training session for civil society was organised in Abuja on mediation. The Interfaith Mediation Centre (Kaduna) was later invited to interact with representatives of the diplomatic community in Abuja. Other contacts with religious leaders took place throughout the year.

Statements by the HR/VP were released to condemn terrorist attacks, including against places of worship. A local public statement was issued in October 2012 on the risk of executions in Edo State. The EU Delegation took part to several public events at the occasion of the International Human Rights day, including a joint press conference with the National Human Rights Commission as well as a dialogue with the Chair of the Justice and Human Rights Committee of the Senate and the Minister of Justice. A radio jingle, co-sponsored with other like-minded diplomatic representations, was produced and broadcasted (47 emissions) on Nigeria's largest radio network.

Eight projects were being implemented in 2012 in Nigeria under the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR) covering areas including the fight against torture and ill-treatments, abolition of the death penalty, the fight against extra-judicial killings, peace-building and conflict prevention and the fight against human trafficking. In addition, an EIDHR Country Based Support Scheme (CBSS, i.e. locally launched) call for proposals resulted in the award of additional 7 grant contracts for the implementation of projects in areas such as peace-building and conflict-prevention, fight against torture and ill-treatments, women's rights and the implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and fight against child trafficking.

One project was being implemented under the Instrument for Stability, to promote peace and stability in the Niger Delta. A call for expression of interest was launched under the same instrument for the Middle Belt.

A 28 million euro programme, 'EU Support to the Justice Sector', was launched with the Contribution Agreement with the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC).

In 2012, the EU and Nigeria continued to cooperate on migration and development-related issues in the framework of the Dialogue for Migration and Development established in 2008. Trafficking in human beings is an issue of particular concern. In this regard, Nigeria has been included in the list of priority countries for cooperation in this field. The EU and Nigeria also worked together on data collection, training, and awareness-raising.

Rwanda

Engagement on human rights and democratisation in Rwanda has continued to rank high in EU activities, in terms both of political dialogue and advocacy on the one hand and of financial support on the other hand.

The priority for European Union action in 2012 was to support and monitor the realization of the commitments that Rwanda made to implement the **UN Human Rights Council Universal Periodic Review (UPR) recommendations** of January 2011. Particular emphasis has been placed on those commitments that address the current constrains which limit the political space by impeding political debate, obstructing freedom of expression and encumbering political organization. The independence of the judiciary and vibrant media landscape were important aspects in this context.

In 2012 the EU was following **the media reform; penal code, and election related reforms including political parties, genocide ideology law** and was supporting the Government of Rwanda to fulfill its commitments. Given the very specific commitments which the Government of Rwanda has already made at the occasion of the UPR, the main activity of the EU Delegation was the organization of regular dialogue in different fora to gauge the progress on the reform process.

Within the framework of political dialogue (Article 8 dialogue), the EU has exchanged views with the Rwandan authorities on political, legal and human rights issues. The law on genocide ideology, Gaçaça, penal code, media law, issues on extradition and universal jurisdiction has been discussed.

The government of Rwanda has promoted **the Joint Governance Assessment** (co-chaired by the EU Delegation since January 2011), by which the government along with development partners regularly identify progress made as well as remaining challenges, and formulate recommendations to improve political and economic governance. Regular Steering Committees took place in 2012 to discuss issues of governance. Issues under "area of "Ruling Justly", include rule of law and human rights and civil liberties.

The EU Delegation and the Member States were active in organizing both formal and informal meetings with human rights organizations.

In order to assist the Government **in implementing the various reforms and following the rule of law** the EU Delegation was supporting the Government of Rwanda mainly through general budget support and sector budget support in the justice, reconciliation, law and order (JRLO) sector. Associated with these programmes, a regular sector dialogue is taking place to discuss human rights related indicators (e.g. reduction of backlog of cases processed by courts, average time of minors in prisons, prison overcrowding). Measures to support the civil society organizations are in place through the thematic budget lines (EIDHR, NSA-LA and EDF). The EU delegation also helped coordinate information sharing with MS and other development partners on civil society funding and support.

Since mid-2012, the attention of the European Union has been particularly focused on the **situation in eastern Congo and violations of human rights that have resulted.**

The EU took very seriously the allegations contained in the draft report of the Group of experts of the United Nation Sanctions Committee about Rwanda's support to the M23 rebellion in eastern Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). The Foreign Affairs Council of 25 June 2012 adopted conclusions on which it called on all parties to protect civilians and authorities to prosecute the perpetrators of human rights. On 10 July 2012, the HR/VP issued a statement which called for an immediate halt to all forms of violence perpetrated by armed groups and expressed concern about allegations of external support to the movement M23. Faced with the advance of rebel east Congo, the PSC has adopted conclusions in September 2012 on DRC/Rwanda. PSC agreed on the political appropriateness of delaying new decisions on Budget Support to Rwanda pending further developments and more constructive engagement from Rwanda.

European Parliamentary Questions during 2012 related to an assessment of EU judicial aid to Rwanda, support to the Gaçaça courts, Torture allegations in Rwanda, Amnesty International report, and the Victoire Ingabire trial.

Sao Tomé and Príncipe

Although São Tome and Principe has not yet ratified all international conventions (including the Rome Statute on the International Criminal Court), human rights are generally well respected. The problems consist mainly in shortcomings in social protection, widespread poverty and weak institutional capacities in the country.

For that reason the action of the EU has mainly concentrated on the strengthening of development cooperation (including rural road maintenance and sexual and reproductive health initiatives) and collaboration with NSA.

During the last political dialogue meeting (27 November 2012), the EU voiced its concern with the on-going political disruption and the negative effects it might cause to the desirable internal stability of the country and vis-à-vis international donors.

Senegal

In Senegal, the year 2012 was marked by the transfer of power from Abdoulaye Wade, who had been in power since 2000, to Macky Sall, following February/March presidential elections. The EU deployed an Election Observation Mission of over 90 observers led by Thijs Berman, MEP. The EOM welcomed the peaceful roll-out of the elections and their overall good organisation, reiterated by the HRVP in a statement of 26 March, and made recommendations to correct some irregularities that occurred during the process. The EU deployed an Electoral Expert Mission (EEM) to assess the 1 July legislative elections.

Human rights issues continued to feature prominently in the political dialogue under Art.8 of the Cotonou Agreement and in the EU's cooperation with Senegal. In 2012 the EU continued to focus on women's and children's rights, non-discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation, support to the peace process in Casamance, improvement of the justice system to fight impunity and corruption and on the further strengthening of civil society.

Two Article 8 meetings with the new authorities were held in 2012. Violence against women and the situation of children, in particular forced child begging and child abuse, as well as discrimination against LGBTI persons were raised. In October 2012, following an indictment of a journalist for "unnatural acts", and homophobic articles in the Senegalese press, the EU insisted on a specific meeting with the authorities on the indivisibility of human rights and encouraged Senegal to modify its legislation to end discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation.

Several projects were implemented or launched in 2012 to support human rights in Senegal. Through its 10th EDF Support to a Justice project (7,9M€), the EU contributed to the capacity building of the justice system to fight impunity and to the improvement of access to justice in Senegal. Projects aimed at raising awareness on the phenomena of child begging and trafficking among journalists, local authorities, civil society organisations and community leaders were implemented. The EU and its Member States continued projects aiming at sensitising women and local communities on women's rights granted by national and international law, in particular the Convention for the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). Projects contributing to the discussion on the abolition of FGM, other practices harmful to girls, as well as early pregnancies were continued. 12 projects (total amount of 1.365.000 EUR) aiming at strengthening gender equality in access to political, economic and social rights were implemented. Through the 10th EDF Non State Actors capacity building programme, the EU supported several small projects aiming at strengthening of socio political rights of women in the Casamance peace process.

The EU reconfirmed in 2012 its support to the new Senegalese administration's commitment to organise in Senegal the trial of Hissène Habré, former President of Chad (hosted in Senegal) accused of crimes against humanity. Negotiations with the African Union led to an agreement in August to establish special chambers embedded in the Senegalese judicial system. The EU was preparing at year end a grant from its Instrument for Stability to the Government of Senegal to support the initial phase of the trial.

Seychelles

In line with the Human Rights priorities for the country, in 2012, the European Union raised issues related to the electoral reform process (legal and institutional reforms) and the freedom of assembly and freedom of the media. As a result, draft legislation, the "Public Assembly Act", was submitted to the parliament which provides for less discretionary powers of the Commissioner of Police. In addition, the EU organised the first Human Rights Defenders meeting in October 2012 on the state of human rights issues. In 2012, the local EU Presidency (France) encouraged the government to ratify the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography.

In 2012, the EU also provided technical support for the elaboration of a National Human Rights Action Plan in collaboration with the Commonwealth Secretariat. Following technical assistance funded by the EU to ensure compliance of national Human Rights legislation with international treaty obligations, Seychelles set up a Human Rights Treaty Reporting Committee in October 2012 which has been mandated to oversee the implementation of these treaties, and to draft and implement the National Human Rights Action Plan.

Sierra Leone

Presidential, legislative and local elections were held on 17 November 2012 in a peaceful manner with a high participation rate of 87.3%. The incumbent President Ernest Bai Koroma was re-elected with 58.7% of valid votes. The EU supported the preparation and the conduct of elections, as well as election-related campaigns focused on youth and women. It deployed an election observation mission of 100 persons that was recognized by national stakeholders as having added confidence and trust to the electoral process and having contributed to defuse tensions. The mission stated that the elections were well run, credible and conducive to democracy, but identified a number of shortcomings such as misuse of the incumbency, insufficient voter education and failure to enhance women's participation as candidates. The recommendations of the EU Electoral Observation mission were discussed with all stakeholders to contribute to a more inclusive and participatory democracy. In November the High Representative Catherine Ashton issued two statements supporting the electoral process.

In December the EU welcomed Sierra Leone's support for the UNGA resolution on the moratorium on the use of the death penalty (which legally still exists, but there is a de facto moratorium).

The EU continued to contribute to the implementation of recommendations of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) and of the Universal Review Process (undertaken by Sierra Leone in 2011) through police training, support to human rights associations, good governance, non-discrimination and access to justice.

In 2012 the EU and its Member States continued to implement programmes and projects, *inter alia*, in favour of persons with disabilities (capacity-building, mental health), women's (e.g. empowerment, combating gender based violence, including FGM) and children's rights (child labour), worked towards more access to justice, including training for legal and para-legal practitioners, freedom of information and better health services, including the improvement of reproductive and sexual health. The Sierra Leone Human Rights Commission was also supported. In December a country call for proposals in view of promoting human rights, in particular TRC implementation was launched under the EIDHR worth up to EUR 0.9 million.

The EU continues to assist civil society in building capacity through the locally designed *Enciss* programme which includes grants for organisations working on good governance, women's rights, access to justice and youth rights.

The EU continued to fund activities to reinforce the legacy (and in the end the long term impact) and outreach of the Special Court of Sierra Leone which has been trying perpetrators of war crimes during the civil war and, in May, sentenced Charles Taylor, the former Liberian President, to 50 years.

Somalia

Conflict-related abuses, including killings, displacement, and restriction of humanitarian assistance continued to severely impact civilians in Somalia and remain a major concern for the EU. In addition, large areas of South Central Somalia were not under central government control, severely hampering the Rule of Law throughout the country and allowing for severe human rights abuses.

According to the United Nations, 1.3 million people were displaced within Somalia in 2012 and by July 2012 there were more than one million Somali refugees in the Horn of Africa. The majority of internally displaced persons (IDPs) lack adequate shelter, access to food, health care, education, and live in poor sanitary conditions. Living in unprotected and congested IDP settlements, women and girls are particularly exposed to sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) and are often denied access to assistance by IDP committee leaders or to adequate legal redress.

In territories controlled by the Al-Shabaab insurgency, killings, torture, restriction of humanitarian assistance, and extortion were reported. To address this situation, the EU supports the development of Somali security capacity accountable to political authority, as well as rule of law capacities across the country, to provide protection for the population and respect human rights. The EU is also concerned about cases of abuse of power and human rights violations committed by the security and armed forces.

Other major human rights abuses that the EU frequently raised with the Somali authorities included harsh and life-threatening prison conditions; arbitrary arrest and detention; denial of fair trial; recruitment of child soldiers; trafficking of persons; abuse of and discrimination against clan and religious minorities; forced labour; and child labour. The new Somali political leadership has committed itself to implementing the remaining tasks of the Roadmap, notably the protection of human rights. The protection of civilians and respect of international humanitarian law from all parties are key concerns for the EU.

The adoption of a "provisional" Federal Constitution provides the opportunity to enshrine democratic principles and human rights in order to build an equal representative society, including the rights of women.

The Rights of Children in Armed Conflict are also a main concern for the EU. Children have been forcibly recruited, abused, maimed, and pushed into forced labour. The adoption of an action plan against the recruitment of children constitutes an important step forward for which the EU is seeking to provide funding under the EIDHR.

The freedom of the media is another concern for the EU. Journalists are regularly arrested and killed or wounded in targeted attacks. The EU reacts promptly to these cases by contacting the legal aid units in case of detention, or by calling on the Police Commissioner or the Attorney General to investigate the circumstances as well as by issuing statements. The EU linked its human rights priorities with the EIDHR call for proposals. In addition, the protection of human rights defenders includes a relocation fund under the EIDHR. Access to justice for the most vulnerable is covered under the EU's Rule of Law program.

In 2012, the newly established European Union Member States Working Group (open also to Norway, Switzerland and the United States) has created a solid relationship with other agencies working on human rights such as in the UN system, Human Rights Watch, or the human rights defenders network. It has also monitored media freedoms, paid technical missions to the field and met with HR defenders.

South Africa

On 18 September 2012, the Fifth EU-South Africa Summit was held in Val-Duchesse, Brussels acknowledging progress on the implementation of the EU-South Africa Strategic Partnership rooted in shared values, including human rights, democracy and the rule of law. Both the EU and South Africa leaders reaffirmed their determination to continued close and early consultations in the human rights domain in relevant fora and on a broad range of issues, including discrimination, gender equality, children rights and private military companies.

The Summit also welcomed the formalisation of the EU-South Africa Human Rights dialogue. On 19 November the EU Foreign Affairs Council formally established such dialogue to be held on an annual basis and cover relevant human rights, democracy and rule of law issues. The overall objective of such enhanced cooperation is for the EU and South Africa to bring forward the domestic and international human rights dimensions, consolidating ongoing efforts aimed at respect for, promotion and fulfilment of human rights universal principles.

In July 2012, the EU and South Africa held their Fifth informal dialogue on human rights, building on the dialogues held since December 2009. Discussions encompassed cooperation in multilateral fora and on a wide range of continental and domestic issues. EU-South Africa development cooperation continued to support human rights through various programmes including the Access to Justice and Promotion of Constitutional Rights programme as well as civil society support through the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights.

Throughout the year, the EU continued to monitor developments and engage South Africa in the field of human rights, inter alia with focus on labour rights/use of force by police against demonstrators, immigrants rights and xenophobia, the ongoing debate on the adoption of the Protection of State Information Bill and on the Traditional Authorities Bill, the situation of LGBTI persons in the country. The EP also paid a particular attention to the Lonmin-Marikana labour dispute via its Resolution on the matter adopted in September in the aftermath of the Marikana mine tragedy.

In September 2012 the UN Human Rights Council adopted the outcome report of its universal periodic review on South Africa. Of the 152 recommendations received South Africa accepted those related to the attainment of the Millennium Development Goals; empowerment and protection of vulnerable groups; elimination of racism, violence against women and domestic violence; criminalization of torture and other cruel and inhumane treatment, and a number of others. South Africa was commended for the progress it made addressing socio-economic development, social cohesion and national reconciliation. South Africa was urged however to review its current policy towards improving education in the country, to break the cycle of sexual and xenophobic violence and to protect the rights of asylum seekers and refugees.

South Sudan

After independence in 2011, following decades of civil war and impunity, South Sudan is faced with the challenge of building accountable and transparent institutions from scratch. The on-going constitutional process and upcoming elections can be viewed as a litmus test for the country's current standing and future direction. An inadequate legal framework, with many international human rights instruments yet to be ratified, makes it difficult for the Government to be held accountable and impunity is endemic. The Government has also frequently restricted the freedoms of expression and the press subjecting those who hold contrary political views to harassment, arbitrary arrest and detention.

The human rights situation in the country further suffered from activities of rebel militia groups (RMGs), as well as inter-ethnic clashes, for example in Jonglei State. The arrival of returnees and refugees from the Sudan, drought, and overburdened resources has further deepened the humanitarian crisis.

In a climate of extreme poverty and underdevelopment, economic and social rights remain largely unfulfilled, especially concerning the rights to food, health, access to clean and safe water and sanitation, education and adequate housing.

In 2012, EU efforts in South Sudan focused firstly on developing a network of contacts, setting up coordination mechanisms at EU level, and working towards a common strategic human rights framework. The new EU Delegation in Juba, in close cooperation with EU Member States present on the ground, has also started formulating a comprehensive approach in targeting both Government's institutional capacity building but also those of other actors such as civil society, private sector, faith-based organizations and the media.

In 2012, the EU initiated direct support to three Human Rights Defenders and their respective families, within the framework of the EIDHR Emergency Fund. The EU continues to be engaged in eliminating violence against women through their empowerment, and access to legal rights and literacy. The EU contributes to enhancing prevention, protection and response activities on Gender Based Violence (GBV) at grass root level through community level awareness raising and strengthening local legal response capacities in 7 States. Focus was also put on strengthening the institutional and administrative capacity of the Staff in the National Legislative Assembly and Members of Parliament.

On two occasions, in October and December 2012, the Spokesperson of the High Representative/Vice President issued statements on the expulsion of a UN Human Rights Officer and expressing her concern on the killing of a human rights activist in Juba and an unarmed protestor in Wau. These human rights related incidents are an indication of a worrying shrinking of political space in South Sudan.

The EU is in regular contact with the South Sudanese civil society and supports their lobbying efforts for a comprehensive Bill of Rights in the on-going National Constitutional Review processes. In addition, training is provided to national and grassroots Civil Society Organisations and local communities on Human Rights and Rule of Law. The EU also provided technical assistance and material support to South Sudan's Human Rights Commission. Finally, the EU Delegation, together with the Embassy of Norway, undertook a successful demarche in December 2012 with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, in relation to the UNGA vote in favour of the Resolution for Moratorium of the Death Penalty.

Sudan

The overall trend for protection and promotion of human rights and democracy in Sudan was characterized by a steady deterioration throughout 2012 with considerable dips during periods of intensified public protests during the summer months. Key areas of concern remain the systematic targeting of individuals and groups raising criticism against the regime – be it through mass- and social media, popular protest or traditional political opposition. Harassment, arbitrary arrest, ill treatment and torture are frequent and widespread, mostly carried out by the National Security Service (NISS), who operate with impunity. Youth activists have been particularly targeted, due to the origin of many public protests in universities.

In response, the EU Delegation and the EU Special Representative for Sudan's office have addressed the general situation by instigating public statements, mostly by the HRVP Spokesperson, while at the same time carried out extensive silent diplomacy with regard to key cases. Trial monitoring has been carried out in coordination with EU Member States and like-minded.

South Sudanese living in Sudan constitute another particularly vulnerable group, due to their opaque legal status, following the independence of South Sudan. The new religious composition of Sudan as a predominantly Muslim country equally placed non-Muslim minorities in a vulnerable position. Christian leaders warn of shrinkage of space for the Christian minority – a concern that caused international uproar when a Church in Khartoum was set on fire

The EU has throughout the year met with key representatives of the Church in the context of EU working groups for both Political Affairs and Human Rights. The EU has moreover raised the issue with the National Human Rights Commission and with the Advisory Council for Human Rights, the Government's main human rights branch.

Civil society and human rights defenders have raised concern of what they fear to be an increased conservatism with regards to the interpretation of parts of the penal code by certain judges. This was manifested in two issued stoning sentences as well one sentence of amputation. None of the sentences were implemented and cases were eventually dropped.

In both individual cases, the EU met with the lawyers for the defendants and on their advice, carried out extensive silent diplomacy targeting Government officials at the highest level. Concern with regards to increased conservatism is regularly raised in the context of the constitutional review.

The Death Penalty is applied to various crimes, particularly when related to apostasy or treason against the state. The execution rate is unknown. Ongoing conflicts in the Three Areas and Darfur continues to be of serious concern with human rights abuse assumed to be widespread but where – with the exception of UNAMID's Human Rights Section - lack of access so far has prevented international monitoring. In spite of the establishment of a National Human Rights Commission, human rights monitoring is de facto non-existent from the side of the Government.

On 8 March 2012, the Spokesperson of the High Representative issued a statement addressing the increase in cross-border conflict and human rights violations in both Sudan and South Sudan.

Recognising the gravity of the human rights situation in Sudan along with the limitations of external action in terms of improving the situation in the short term, EU policy objectives with regards to human rights are based on the long-term objective of establishing legal and institutional foundation for protection of human rights in the country. This includes ratification and implementation of key human rights treaties and mainstreaming of human rights in national legislation and governance structures. An important component hereof is to strengthen independent human rights actors and institutions in Sudan, especially through support to human rights defenders and civil society. The establishment of a regular policy dialogue on human rights with the Government of Sudan was thus a key objective for 2012 and was to some extent achieved through 1) regular meetings between the EU Human Rights working group and the Advisory Council for Human Rights and 2) the establishment of a so called 'International Partners' Forum for Human Rights', which aside from the EU includes a broad range of African, Arab and Asian partners. After formal meetings, the main result of the dialogue has been information sharing and confidence building, based on the recognition that a dialogue, before it can be strong, must exist.

Sudan underwent UPR in May 2011. In the summer of 2012, the Advisory Council for Human Rights, with the support of UNDP, presented an implementation plan for UPR recommendations, focusing mainly on capacity building in the justice sector.

Swaziland

Swaziland is Africa's last absolute monarchy where all ultimate powers are vested in the King. Political parties can neither operate legally nor participate in general elections. Labour demonstrations are often met with police brutality, corruption is rampant and violence against women widespread.

One of the objectives of the EU's external action is to support and consolidate democracy, and to promote human rights and the rule of law. In 2012 EU action in democracy and human rights area used several tools. Under the **Article 8 political dialogue**, the EU asked the Government to respect its commitment to promote democratic principles and legalise political parties. It delivered the same message to the King during an audience on 18 November.

In May 2012, the EU issued a **local statement** expressing its concern over the infringement in labour freedoms and calling on the Government of Swaziland to guarantee the rights of all citizens to freedom of assembly, association and expression enshrined in its constitution.

The EU also used its **cooperation to support democracy and human rights** in Swaziland. In addition to spending € 2.2 million to allow Orphan and Vulnerable Children to attend school, it awarded 3 grants totalling 900 000 Euros under the EIDHR to promote a democratic society, to increase women's participation and representation in society, and to improve the quality of life of children with disabilities in Swaziland.

Tanzania

Despite Tanzania's rather positive human rights record, there is considerable scope for improvement. In 2012 the EU and its Member States strengthened their joint action in the area of human rights, agreeing on common priorities and strategies to better address them. Amongst the priority objectives pursued by the EU in Tanzania are the abolition of the death penalty, protection of human rights defenders, fight against gender discrimination, violence against women and children, promotion/protection of rights of children, LGBTIs, people living with disabilities and indigenous groups.

Several serious incidents took place in 2012, such as the killing and mutilations of albinos, the killings of elderly women in the context of witchcraft, the harassment of LGBTI activists and the suspicious death of one of them. Also, authorities orchestrated land evictions of pastoralist communities, and crowd control during demonstrations that resulted in injuries and the death of several persons. The leader of a doctors' strike was beaten up and tortured. He alleged the involvement of state operatives. The EU has approached the authorities on all if these cases.

Media freedom and access to information are regulated by outdated legislation (1976), providing e.g. for executive powers that allowed the banning of a critical newspaper. Self-censorship is common, especially in Zanzibar. A journalist was killed by police while covering an opposition event. The EU has called upon the Government of Tanzania to make every effort to promote the freedom of the press and to preserve freedom of expression.

EU actions in support of the advancement and implementation of the human rights agenda took various forms from political dialogue through public diplomacy to targeted technical cooperation. The human rights situation was raised by EU Heads of Mission with the Foreign Minister, in the context of Article 8 Cotonou Agreement Political Dialogue. The EU and Member States have dedicated a photo exhibition to the cause of pastoralist communities. The EU also advocated with the authorities for the abolition of the death penalty and the freedom of religion and belief. The EU and Member States were the driving force behind the establishment of a national coalition of human rights defenders and continue liaising with the coalition in the case of human rights incidents.

On a more positive side, 2012 also experienced some favourable developments such as the acceptance by the National Authorities to examine the recommendations of the Universal Periodic Review (which was undertaken in October 2011) concerning (amongst others) the abolition of the death penalty and the ratification of the Convention Against Torture.

Throughout 2012 the EU and EU Member States funded several programmes to strengthen the institutional framework for human rights and the rule of law. EU financial assistance and targeted cooperation continued to support community programmes, civil society organisations and human rights activists' efforts to fight violence against women and children, child labour, strengthen child protection systems, promote economic, social and political rights and empowerment of marginalised groups such as rural women, indigenous communities and people living with disabilities. As an example, the EU and several Member States have, amongst others, earmarked approximately € 10 million to support democratic empowerment and genuine and credible electoral processes. In addition, the EU Delegation has earmarked € 2 million to support Legal Sector and Juvenile Justice Reforms in Zanzibar which complements long-standing Member State support and commitment to legal aid and fair, timely and accessible justice to all.

Togo

There was some legislative progress in 2012, such as the adoption of a revised code governing the person and the family. Important developments were the submission of the report of the Truth, Justice and Reconciliation Commission (CVJR, support of EUR 1.6 million from the EU) and the report of the National Human Rights Commission on the occurrence of torture in security institutions, whose conclusions the government attempted to modify. The recommendations contained in these two reports prompted commitments to implement them, but only part of the implementation has been completed.

The human rights situation was discussed at the two political dialogue meetings on 13 April and 14 September 2012 and at regular meetings with the political parties and the human rights organisations. The political dialogue meetings discussed the political situation, demonstrations, the human rights situation, the report on cases of torture, judicial reform, national reconciliation, and national and regional security questions. Several local statements by the EU were published, encouraging respect for human rights and fundamental rights, especially freedom of expression.

The main priorities for the EU are the reform of the judicial system and the prison system, including ensuring respect for the rights of detainees, national reconciliation, the promotion of fundamental freedoms and the prevention of violence during and after elections, and capacity building for human rights defenders. In 2012, EU cooperation activities included a Support Project for Civil Society and National Reconciliation amounting to EU 4.4 million, which covered reconciliation and protection of human rights, as well as a call for proposals for Non-State Actors and Local Authorities (EUR 2.3 million), with one of the areas of action being human rights and access to justice. Within the framework of the Support Project for the Electoral Process, six microprojects on civic education were implemented by civil society, as well as training courses for the security forces on respect for democratic principles and training for female leaders in political parties, the electoral administration, civil society and the media. EUR 1 million has been allocated for Togolese civil society observation of the next elections and capacity building. Under the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights, the "Atlas of Torture" project has led the government to make significant commitments concerning prisons, and a project carried out by the World Organisation against Torture (OMCT) increased capacity in civil society and supported civil participation in the Committee against Torture.

The dialogue between the EU Delegation to Togo and human rights organisations has intensified this year with regard to both planning and cooperation.

Uganda

In Uganda, the year 2012 was dominated by a debate on Freedom of Expression and Assembly and a perceived shrinking space for Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) working in politically sensitive fields, such as civil and political human rights, land rights, oil governance, accountability, and particularly LGBTI rights. The EU Delegation worked very actively on those issues and other areas of human rights and democracy in 2012.

Uganda underwent its first ever UPR in October 2011 and accepted a large number of the recommendations. However, there are concerns about the level of commitment to implement the recommendations the government had accepted.

Freedom of Expression and Assembly remained an area of concern throughout 2012, with continued constraints placed on demonstrations, including some incidences of violent suppression by security forces, and reported harassment of CSOs and media working in politically sensitive areas. The EU and the EU Member States continued political dialogue at the highest political level (President, Ministers) on these issues of concern as well as specific cases of arbitrary arrests. The EU and EU MS also held regular and ad hoc meetings with HRDs to assist those HRDs under threat and in emergency situations. The first EU HRD award was given, in May 2012, to a rural organisation working on anti-corruption and democracy in Fort Portal, West Uganda.

The 2009 draft Anti-Homosexuality Bill (AHB) reappeared in Parliament after having been shelved during the first half of 2012. The EU reacted by raising this issue regularly with the President, the Minister of Foreign Affairs and the Minister for Internal Affairs, police officials and MPs. EU and EU MS also met with several LGBTI activists and organisations to provide assistance and advice on emergency support.

The EU organised, in cooperation with an established local CSO (FHRI), an event to raise awareness of the fight against the death penalty (which is still in place in Uganda). The EU has also remained active in raising gender issues with the Government and Parliament. Using the EU Gender Action Plan 2010-2015 as a tool, the EU and EU MS have been reaching out to CSOs to develop concerted efforts to address gaps and key issues regarding the national gender agenda.

The EU also implemented a project to combat child trafficking and to provide appropriate and comprehensive legal aid to child trafficking victims in Eastern Uganda, the first of its kind in Uganda. The EU supported a CSO in holding two expert meetings on the domestication of the UN Convention against Torture in Uganda. The EU further supported the Anti-Torture Act which was adopted in 2012.

On supporting democratisation, the EU and the EU MS held numerous meetings with the executive as well as the legislative to emphasise the importance of effective checks and balances in a democratic society, including the need for electoral reforms in Uganda and for political space to be opened up. The EU also met with the Electoral Commission, the Judicial Service Commission and the Attorney General to follow up on specific recommendations of the previous EU EOM. This dialogue is ongoing and 2013 will hopefully see the first results of the discussion on electoral reform in the National Consultative Forum.

Zambia

The EU's policy objectives related to human rights and democracy in 2012 in Zambia cover five priorities: i) the abolishment of the death penalty, ii) the improvement of prison conditions, including the fight against torture and police violence, iii) the support to and promotion of the rights of LGBTI people, iv) the fight against gender based violence and the promotion of women and girls' rights and v) support to the freedom of expression.

In 2012, the EU continued to support projects aiming at the consolidation of democratic processes and institutions: the Support to the Electoral Cycle Programme (together with FI, and NL), the Access to Justice Programme (with DE and DK) as well as an Anti-Human Trafficking project. Denmark, Ireland, Sweden and the UK were also instrumental in setting up the Zambian Governance Foundation (ZGF), a joint basket fund which aims at promoting improved governance, and accountability.

The EU published media statements on the occasion of the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, the Human Rights Day and the World/European Day against the Death Penalty. The EU also organized a radio programme on the death penalty which was broadcasted by community radios in local languages while FR organized a debate on the topic.

Official demarches were undertaken by the EU and MS in 2012, on the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the ratification of the ILO Convention on the Worst forms of Child Labour, on the Moratorium on the use of the Death Penalty and on Freedom of Religion or Belief.

Zambia was reviewed under the UPR at the UNHRC in October 2012. The topics covered included death penalty, women's rights, children's rights, non-discrimination, torture and prison conditions, NGOs and Human Rights defenders, freedom of assembly and association and freedom of expression. 125 recommendations were made, of which Zambia declared on 2 November that 70 enjoy its support, and it will further consider 54 and provide a response no later than at HRCC22. One recommendation was rejected. Ahead of the UPR meeting, EU missions in Zambia prepared a joint update of the human rights situation in the country. 13 EU Member States participated in the dialogue in Geneva.

Zimbabwe

Since 2009, the Global Political Agreement (GPA) has achieved a measure of stability in terms of economic recovery and in providing for an opening of the political space. Cohabitation in government positions has fostered less confrontational interaction and collaboration and day-to-day interactions have built a degree of confidence and trust, allowing for greater freedom in exchanging ideas and providing input on policies. Overall, the general human rights situation in Zimbabwe has improved. The UN High Commissioner for Human Rights recognised these improvements following her visit in May 2012, upon the invitation of the Government of Zimbabwe, while also stressing the need for further progress.

However, the political conundrum in Zimbabwe is far from over and many challenges still remain. The culture of impunity for perpetrators remains an issue of concern. In late 2012, there were worrying incidents of harassment against advocacy oriented organisations thus signalling a closing of democratic and electoral space. With elections approaching in 2013 political tension is rising again.

The EU Delegation remained firmly at the forefront in the promotion and protection of human rights in Zimbabwe, both through its development portfolio, with specific projects, but also politically through dialogue with the Government in the context of the re-engagement process. The EU also engaged in regular discussion and updates within EU fora (Political officers meeting and Heads of Mission), as well as through open dialogue with civil society organisations and follow-up of arrests and court cases.

In 2012, the EU provided support to the Zimbabwean constitutional commissions, as well as to the judiciary, with the main goal of supporting the democratic transition and effective implementation of the reforms foreseen in the Global Political Agreement.

At the same time, in 2012 the EU committed €5.5m EURO under various financial instruments to support civil society organisations. In this regard, continued strategic use of EIDHR and Non State Actor funds has been pivotal to ensure support to civil society in its efforts to consolidate democratic transition and to protect and promote human rights. The entire 2011 and 2012 EIDHR CBSS have been dedicated to fighting against impunity, monitoring of Human Rights violation, protecting of Human Rights Defenders and to the provision of assistance to victims of political violence.

In May 2012, EU Ambassadors met with the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights during her visit to Zimbabwe. The human rights situation, and particularly arbitrary arrests, was discussed.

In addition, in 2012 the EU supported a specific project on the fight against torture advocating for the ratification of the UN Convention against Torture (CAT). Ratification of CAT is one of the key recommendations adopted by Zimbabwe during the 2011 UPR exercise.

The EU also provided support to gender equality and women's empowerment in Zimbabwe, mostly through the "Gender Support Programme" implemented by UN Women. This programme aims to enhance the participation of women in peace-building and raise awareness about UN Security Council Resolution 1325.

VI The Middle East and the Arabian Peninsula

Bahrain

Bahrain experienced sustained upheaval since February 2011 and is the Gulf country most touched by the “Arab Spring”, but periods of unrest have occurred more or less regularly since the country’s independence in 1971. The current crisis is thus deeply rooted in the country's history with cyclical periods of unrest.

Since the resurgence of unrest, The EU made full use of all the opportunities at its disposal to convey consistent messages to all sides in Bahrain about the necessity of refraining from violence and engaging in a constructive and peaceful dialogue, publically through regular statements (on the occasion of the first anniversary of unrest, expressing concern at the situation of Abdulhadi Al-Khawaja and Nabeel Rajab, condemning violence, and on the occasion of the first anniversary of the publication of the Report of the Bahrain Independent Commission of Inquiry)[8] , and through contacts with the authorities, including at the highest level. In close cooperation with the Member States present on the ground, presence at different court proceedings related to the unrest was also ensured. Visits were also made to Bahrain by senior EU officials, who inter alia visited a human rights defender in prison. HR/VP Ashton has issued numerous statements condemning the use of violence from all sides, the thoroughly documented human rights violations and calling for the urgent commencement of a meaningful national dialogue leading to genuine reconciliation.

Throughout the process, the EU has put pressure on all sides for national reconciliation and has consistently called for light to be shed on the alleged cases of Human Rights abuses committed by the security forces and to hold accountable those responsible. The High Representative has made clear in her statements that the priority must be given to the full and timely implementation of the recommendations of the Bahraini Independent Commission of Inquiry, contained in the report issued by the Commission on 23 November 2011, as well as to rebuild trust through national dialogue without preconditions in order to address the socio-economic grievances of the Bahraini people.

[8] Available at http://eeas.europa.eu/gulf_cooperation/news/index_en.htm

In parallel, the EU has expressed its willingness to provide concrete support to this process through the provision of assistance and expertise. The EU is currently finalising preparations for a project financed under the Instrument for Stability. Its main focus will be, fully in line with the recommendations of the Bahrain Independent Commission of Inquiry, the design and delivery of a comprehensive training curriculum for judges and prosecutors of the Special Investigations Unit (created on 27 February 2012 in order to investigate allegations on torture and ill-treatment) on the prohibition of torture and ill treatment based on the Istanbul Protocol.

The European Parliament issued a resolution on the human rights situation in Bahrain on 15 March 2012[9], condemning continuing violations and calling for the full implementation of the BICI report and the release of imprisoned activists. A delegation of the EP sub-committee for Human Rights visited Bahrain from 18 to 21 December 2012, accompanied by the EU Head of Delegation in Riyadh, accredited to Bahrain. The delegation assessed the human rights situation in the country through meetings with interlocutors from all strands of society[10].

Bahrain underwent a Universal Periodic Review at the UN Human Rights Council in May and September 2012. Bahrain fully accepted 145, and partially accepted 13, recommendations outlined in the UN UPR (out of 176). Bahrain's commitment to implement UPR recommendations primarily concerned criminal justice issues, prevention of torture, rights of women, protection of children and minorities, ratification of international treaties, preventing human trafficking, and fully implementing the recommendations outlined in the Bahrain Independent Commission of Inquiry (BICI). Bahrain had reservations about several recommendations seen as "*contrary to the Islamic Sharia or to the constitution or are of political nature and interfere in the country's sovereignty*". Bahrain agreed to voluntarily provide an interim report to the Council by late 2016, prior to the next UPR

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9 Available at http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?type=TA&language=EN&reference=P7-TA-2012-94

10 The final report of the visit is available at http://www.europarl.europa.eu/document/activities/cont/201301/20130129ATT59957/20130129ATT59957EN.pdf

Iran

Death penalty remained a major issue in 2012 (292 announced executions, actual number feared to be as high as 523). Several of these executions had apparent political motives, and targeted ethnic or religious minority groups. Arbitrary imprisonment of human rights activists and bloggers continued to be used as a "political tool" by the regime. Restrictions on freedom of expression and information increased, including through online surveillance and satellite jamming.

The EU reacted with public statements. Death penalty was a particular focus of these interventions – targeting both mass executions as well as death penalties awarded following grossly unfair trials, with apparent political motives. The EU continued to call on Iran to respect minimum international standards, and urged it to establish a moratorium on the use of the death penalty through several statements by the High Representative.

The High Representative's statements also covered the imprisonment of opposition leaders and activists, unfair trials and harsh punishment against internet activists, the jamming of international satellite broadcasting and the death in custody of blogger Sattar Beheshti, which was also the focus of a European Parliament resolution of 22 November. In the latter case, it has to be noted that the Iranian authorities dismissed the head of the Iranian cyber police, and have arrested several people in connection to Beheshti's death.

The EU also continued to focus on supporting human rights lawyers. As part of this effort, several statements were released on imprisoned or in other ways punished human rights lawyers throughout the year. The European Parliament also awarded the 2012 Sakharov Price of Freedom of Thought to the imprisoned Iranian human rights lawyer Nasrin Sotoudeh, jointly with film-maker Jafar Panahi.

2012 confirmed the negative trend with repression and discrimination of many individuals belonging to ethnic and religious minorities, in spite of constitutional guarantees. Common practices included imprisonment for conscience, unfair trial of political prisoners, corporal punishment and use of death penalty, as well as systematic restrictions on movement and denial of certain civil rights. The EU reacted to this through a statement by the High Representative in the case of the execution of three Ahwazi Arab men, and monitored the situation by maintaining open dialogues with minority groups both within Iran and in exile. The European Parliament passed a resolution expressing concern over the situation for ethnic minorities in Iran on 14 June.

On 23 March 2012, the EU updated its sanctions list of individuals responsible, directly or by order, of grave human rights violations inside Iran. The 78 Iranian individuals now named on this list are subject to an asset-freeze and travel-ban in the EU.

The EU continued to engage with Iranian civil society within Iran and in exile, so as to support the protection and the promotion of human rights in Iran. This was done in particular through a number of projects financed by dedicated instruments, including the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR). For security reasons, these projects are EU restricted.

Iraq

The human rights situation in Iraq remains a matter of concern. While the government took some positive steps in 2012, the criminal justice system remains a major weakness, and there are serious problems with the conduct of the security forces and the treatment of detainees.

Terrorist violence remains widespread, inflicting a severe impact on the lives of Iraqi citizens. There were frequent, indiscriminate attacks on civilians and the security forces throughout the year. Many hundreds of innocent civilians were killed in such attacks in 2012, and thousands more were wounded.

There was a continued increase in the use of the death penalty during the year, with 129 executions in 2012 compared to 67 in 2011, and 18 in 2010. The EU has repeatedly appealed to Iraq to cease all executions, and to adhere to minimum international standards for the use of the death penalty. A number of statements were issued on the subject, by the HR/VP and locally by the EU Delegation (HRVP's statement on 27 January; local statement on the occasion of the World's Day against the Death Penalty on 10 October). The death penalty was raised repeatedly with the authorities in Baghdad, at the level of the Government, Presidency and the Parliament. The Iraqi Kurdistan Region continues to practice an unofficial moratorium on the use of the death penalty.

The EU regularly raised concerns with the Iraqi government about human rights violations, including violations of women's rights. The EU Delegation maintained regular contact with the authorities and met with representatives of civil society and minorities in both Baghdad and Erbil. EU diplomatic missions continued to coordinate their activities in monthly meetings.

Human rights issues, including freedom of expression, women's rights, rights of persons belonging to minorities, the death penalty, torture and the right to a fair trial have remained priorities for EU assistance to Iraq.

EU has supported Human Rights and Rule of Law sectors in its development plan for 2011-2013 (€22Million). In addition, the EU took the decision to support the newly-established Independent Human Rights Commission (€7.5 million). The EU launched two calls for proposals for Iraqi NGOs. The first one (€3.5 million) intends to encourage a culture of cooperation between civil society and government while the second one (€6.595 million) focuses on areas such as awareness raising, protection of human rights defenders, advancement of rights of vulnerable groups rights including women and children, freedom of expression and promotion of media independences. The EU Rule of Law Mission for Iraq (EUJUST LEX) has continued to provide training and mentoring to the Iraqi police, judiciary and prison service, in Baghdad, Erbil and Basra. The EUJUST LEX provided training to 963 officials: 350 police officials, 330 judiciary officials, and 283 prison staff. Main achievements of the trainings were in particular the development of curricula for the police Federal Investigation Training Course, the establishment of Rule of Law Committees, the preparation of manuals on international judicial cooperation in criminal matters and anti-corruption measures, and the penitentiary International Standards Audit Programme.

In May, the EU and Iraq signed the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement (PCA). The agreement includes a human rights clause as an essential element, and provides for greater cooperation between the EU and Iraq on human rights issues, including through a formal dialogue in a dedicated sub-committee on human rights which will meet once a year. The main parts of the Agreement (including the human rights provisions) entered into provisional application in August.

The High Representative welcomed the appointment in April of the members of the Independent High Commission for Human Rights (IHCHR), Iraqi's first independent human rights body. By the end of the year, a number of issues remained to be resolved before the IHCHR can become fully operational, such as selecting a chairperson, moving into its own building, or beginning to implement its legally mandated activities.

In January, the Iraqi parliament passed a law ratifying the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with disabilities. The Ministry of Human Rights is coordinating the work of an inter-ministerial committee that has been tasked with implementing the National Action Plan on Human Rights, which incorporates many of the 136 recommendations accepted by Iraq during the Universal Periodic Review process at the Human Rights Council in 2010. The EU has planned to mobilise technical assistance in these areas.

The EU has continued to follow closely the situation of ex-Camp Ashraf residents, offering both political and financial support (€12 million), of the process facilitated by the United Nations.

Kuwait

Kuwait has taken steps to improve the general human rights situation and, in relative terms, grants more advanced human rights guarantees than its Gulf neighbours, particularly with regards to freedom of expression, freedom of the press and the existence of powerful democratic institutions.

The main issue in terms of Human Rights is, in particular, the problem of the stateless people ("Bidoons"), possibly over 100,000, who live in the country without enjoying civil rights and without entitlement to State assistance. The Government has stated that some basic provisions are now being granted to the Bidoons, including access to documentation, healthcare, employment and education. Members of the Bidoon community have stated that this provision is patchy. Claims to Kuwaiti citizenship remain unresolved.

Other human rights issues consistently raised included trafficking in persons (particularly domestic workers) and limitations on workers' rights. In addition, concern remains regarding freedom of expression and of assembly, including because of the numbers of individuals arrested since November 2012. The EU also followed closely the developments in the Kuwaiti Parliament, including demonstrations for further political reform. The conviction of activists and twitterers involved in criticizing the government remained a cause of concern for the EU.

Death penalty exists in Kuwait, but with a de facto moratorium in place since 2007. Against this background, the EU consistently reached out to the Kuwaiti authorities to advocate for a continued moratorium on the death penalty and, as a first step, for restricting death penalties –if not abolished altogether- to most severe cases.[11]

[11] In 2013, after the period under review, executions were resumed.

Oman

Oman was one of the two GCC countries to be touched by a degree of unrest in the context of the "Arab spring". As a result, Sultan Qaboos took steps, inter alia, to improve political participation. The conviction of bloggers and activists involved in demonstrations remained a cause for concern for the EU.

Another major issue of concern for the EU is, like in the other Gulf countries, the discrimination of expatriate workers, both legally and in practice, and their general status and situation.
EU Member States present in the country have been active through seminars and training in several fields, including women's rights, human trafficking, and freedom of expression.

Qatar

Qatar has taken several steps in the last few years to improve the general human rights situation. The EU continued to raise the issue of trafficking, primarily of domestic workers with the Qatari authorities. Migrant workers make up to 80 percent of Qatar's population and continue to be subject to abuses.
The EU also addressed the issue of capital punishment with the authorities during the year, advocating a moratorium on executions as a first step towards abolition. There has been no execution since 2003.

The continuous improvement in the overall human rights situation cannot be overlooked, while the situation of migrant workers and of domestic employees, in particular needs further attention. Current discussions on a new media law are followed by the EU with keen interest.

Saudi Arabia

A cautious reform path has been followed in Saudi Arabia in the last few years under the leadership of King Abdullah.

Human rights-related concerns for the EU with regard to Saudi Arabia stem principally from the widespread use of the death penalty, the restrictions on freedom of expression and of religion/belief, allegations of torture and access to justice, in particular detentions for long periods without trial.

Saudi Arabia is one of the countries with the highest number of capital punishments per year. It is hard to give an accurate picture of the phenomenon as the government does not provide figures on executions. The Saudi authorities have a principled stance of refusing any real discussion on this issue as the death penalty is provided for by Sharia which "can not be challenged as a religious source of law". The EU has continued to address this issue in the different formal and informal meetings and contacts with the Saudi authorities.

Saudi Arabia exerts a tight control on all means of expression. Arrests have followed upon tweets and other use of social media. In addition, followers of religions or beliefs other than Islam continue to face very difficult situations and discriminations in Saudi Arabia. The EU has continued to insist, in its contact with the authorities, on the necessity to give adequate protection to fundamental freedoms, including in application of international conventions, the situation of women and freedom of the press.

Even though the situation of women in Saudi Arabia is a matter for concern, the EU welcomed the decision taken by the Saudi King to appoint thirty women (i.e. 20%) to the Shura council in 2013 and allow women to vote and stand in municipal elections as from 2015. The King also decided to allow women lawyers to argue clients' cases in courtrooms in the near future.

United Arab Emirates

The UAE has escaped 'Arab Spring' unrest so far, not least as the very small local population enjoys one of the world's highest GDP/capita. However, NGOs and human rights defenders have been subject to continued restrictions. In 2011 the Gulf Research Centre (which implements EU-funded project on promoting deeper EU-GCC relations) was forced to close its office in Dubai, and thereafter, the German Konrad Adenauer Stiftung and US organisations were also asked to leave the country, for which the EU expressed regret through contacts with the authorities. The UAE government took the decision to submit all contacts between foreign embassies and local NGOs to prior authorization.

Another issue which remains of concern is the death penalty, including for offences that do not meet the criteria of "most serious crimes". The UAE has cooperated with UN Special Rapporteurs; visits by SR Racism, SR Sale of Children and SR Trafficking between 2009 and 2012 and made efforts in combating Human Trafficking (the country being a logistical and travel hub in the region), including the establishment of a Committee to Combat Human Trafficking Offences and the activities of the National Committee to Combat Human Trafficking.

A Delegation of the European Parliament visited the Emirates in 2012; the situation of human rights featured very high on the agenda during the trip and was discussed in high-level meetings with the local authorities. The EU also had the opportunity to raise its concerns on these matters at the latest EU-GCC Joint Council and Ministerial Conference that took place in Luxembourg on 25 June 2012.

A critical EP Resolution on Human Rights in the UAE was adopted in October 2012 . Several exchanges ensued during which the UAE regretted not to have had a chance to express its views and expressed the opinion that the resolution failed to consider many positive aspects of HR protection in the UAE (e.g. FORB, gender equality, etc).

Yemen

EU-Yemen relations are currently governed by a Cooperation agreement signed in 1988. The main EU concerns, in agreement with the other major international actors focused on the need to deal with the widespread human rights violations related to the unrest, the death penalty and to address the situation of women (Yemen ranks last in the global Gender Gap Index).

The EU is actively addressing the issue of the death penalty, particularly with regard to juveniles through regular meetings with the Yemeni authorities. The EU is working with UNICEF and the Ministry of Justice to reinforce institutional capacities towards a child-friendly juvenile justice system and is also in other manners actively engaging with the authorities on the issue, notably supporting the development of a formal civil registry in Yemen, to facilitate proof of age. The absence of formal ID documents for the majority of Yemen's population makes the verification of age very difficult.

The EEAS pursues a continuous dialogue with the Yemeni authorities on all issues related to Human Rights, in particular women's and children's rights, and this at all levels, both in-country through the EU Delegation and during official meetings and dialogues. No Joint Cooperation Committee took place in 2012 in view of the situation in the country, but regular meetings with the government took place, both with senior officials from Headquarters and with EUDEL. Regular demarches are made with the Yemeni authorities and parliamentarians.

The European Parliament subcommittee on Human Rights visited Yemen in May 2012.
Council conclusions were adopted in February, May and November 2012. February conclusions explicitly gave support to "the aspirations of the Yemeni people for an inclusive, democratic and civil state that guarantees respect for human rights and rule of law."

Of the many statements the High Representative and her spokesperson issued during the year, the ones after the elections and after the HRVP discussions with President Hadi explicitly mention human rights.

VII Asia

Afghanistan

EU's political dialogue with Afghan authorities focused on the necessary improvement of Human Rights Policy and its implementation. Areas of particular concern included women's and children's rights, the death penalty, risks to human rights defenders, torture and abuse, arbitrary detention, freedom of expression, religion or belief, transitional justice and impunity. The EU has frequently expressed its concern regarding the high number of civilian casualties as a result of the terrorist attacks, the armed conflict and the fragile security situation. These issues were regularly discussed at political and senior officials' level. In addition, the EU maintained regular contacts with civil society and human rights NGOs through consultations and discussion groups.

The EU continued to support the strengthening of the international, regional and national frameworks for the protection and promotion of human rights in Afghanistan. It played a leading role in ensuring adequate reference to Human Rights and gender issues in the Tokyo Mutual Accountability Framework (TMAF). It established a clear conditionality for benefitting from high levels of support, for which the Afghan Government must implement reforms in key areas such as governance, rule of law, and human rights, including the rights of women, anti-corruption, electoral and judicial reform. In particular, two indicators were included in the TMAF to improve access to justice for all, in particular women, by ensuring that the Constitution and other fundamental laws are enforced expeditiously, fairly and transparently; and to ensure that women can fully enjoy their economic, social, civil, political and cultural rights. This implies tangible progress in implementing the Elimination of Violence Against Women Law (EVAW), and the implementation of the National Action Plan for Women (NAPWA). Similarly, the Afghan authorities committed to allow the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission and civil society organisations to perform their appropriate functions.

Against this backdrop, the EU regretted the Government's lack of progress in appointing qualified commissioners for the AIHRC and has communicated in a joint letter with the Member States to President Karzai, the need to nominate the commissioners soon and based on a consultative process. The EU regretted as well the lack of progress in implementing the National Priority Plan 'Justice'. In response, the EU deferred the disbursement of 20m€ EU support to the justice sector - 'Justice and Rule of Law', being one of the five pillars within the TMAF on which the Government had committed to deliver.

In 2012, the EU issued public statements on occasions of major Human Rights violations. This included the killings of the women's right activist Mrs. Hanifa Safi and MP Ahmad Khan Samangani (July); the beheading of 17 civilians in the Helmand Province (August); the suicide attack in Kabul on 8 September killing at least six Afghan civilians, including children; the declaration and demarche following the executions of 14 convicted criminals (November). In December the HR/VP strongly condemned the killing of the women's rights activist Nadia Seddiqi. The EU expressed grave concerns over the findings published by United Nations Assistance Mission to Afghanistan (UNAMA) reporting that over 50% of the conflict related detainees have been tortured or ill-treated in 2012.

The EU continued to be a key donor in Afghanistan. In addition to the continuous support under DCI (Annual Action Programme 2012 on social protection), civil society initiatives and projects were funded through the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights, the "Non-State Actors and Local Authorities in Development" programme and the Instrument for Stability. 13 new projects were launched (EIDHR, NSA) of which 6 have a strong gender focus.

These support activities promote women's rights through capacity building, human rights education, through ensuring their role in peace and reconciliation process, and by ensuring that they have an active role in public life and in the media space. They include also the provision of legal support, shelter, counseling and mediation for women and girls affected by family violence; the promotion of women's rights through local civil society structures; capacity building and awareness raising activities for justice personnel and community stakeholders; and enabling civil society organisations and local communities at provincial level to follow up on the EVAW Law and UNSCR 1325.

In the same vein, the EU police mission EUPOL AFGHANISTAN was collaborating with UNFPA in providing specialised training for police and prosecutors on EVAW and pursuing a high profile awareness-raising campaign together with, among others, IOM and UNFPA. It has also supported the Ministry of the Interior's Family Response Units through training in criminal investigation techniques and interviewing techniques for women and children.

Finally, negotiations of the Cooperation Agreement on Partnership and Development were launched in which human rights provisions will figure prominently as essential elements of such a future agreement.

Bangladesh

The EU has continued to work towards the sustainable economic and social development of Bangladesh in line with its Cooperation Agreement with the country, which refers to respect for human rights and democratic principles as an essential element.

In its dialogue with the Bangladeshi authorities, the EU raised issues regarding, inter alia, the death penalty, workers' rights, extrajudicial killings and disappearances, freedom of expression, the implementation of the Chittagong Hill Tracts Peace Accord, the role of independent oversight bodies, communal harmony and rights of persons belonging to minorities, and women's and children's rights.

As partisan violence increased on the streets, the EU called for a peaceful solution to political disputes and dialogue on electoral arrangements. Following the kidnapping and murder of labour rights activist Aminul Islam, EU representatives met with workers' organisations and called on the Government to carry out an impartial investigation into this and other disappearances.

The EU provides assistance to registered refugees as well as stateless persons of concern considered as illegal foreigners without refugee legal status.

Following the outburst of communal violence in Rakhine State, Myanmar and the inflow of Rohingya refugees into Bangladesh, the EU worked to ensure that refugees were treated in accordance with humanitarian standards. It made efforts to ensure that its humanitarian support on the ground was delivered without hindrance. In parallel, the EU also continued its diplomatic and development efforts with Myanmar to contribute towards a long-term solution to the situation of the Rohingya population.

In the aftermath of a tragic fire at a garment factory in Ashulia, the European Union reacted rapidly to help those affected by the fire. A project co-funded by the EU and Germany for the improvement of social and environmental standards in industries helped to provide medical assistance to victims and food and other items to the affected families. The EU also met with officials of the Bangladesh Garments Manufacturers and Exporters Association as a first step in a series of efforts to improve health and safety in factories.

In 2012, the EU launched two programmes aimed at promoting social cohesion and economic opportunities for the poor. These projects are seeking to improve livelihoods and food security of the poorest and to enhance the competitiveness of cottage and small enterprises.

In April, the EU organised a Civil Society Conference on Sustainable Development in Bangladesh. Participants highlighted the importance of social cohesion and of institutional accountability for the furtherance of human rights in Bangladesh.

Bhutan

Bhutan is preparing for Parliamentary elections in June 2013.
Throughout 2012, EU funding supported the democratisation process mainly focussing on the establishment of an Annual Capital Grants system to strengthen fiscal decentralisation to the district and sub-district level.

Nepal and Bhutan agreed to resume Minister-level talks to address the situation of alleged Bhutanese refugees in Eastern Nepal.

The EU Delegation to Bhutan raised human rights matters of concern, in particular the refugee issue.
The EU also continued to support a project targeting four selected communities aiming at leveraging and preserving culture and traditions of minority groups in three districts of Bhutan.

Brunei

Brunei is an absolute monarchy. Since 1962, the Sultan has ruled under emergency powers that place few limits on his power. Democratization is ongoing but only very slowly. In a rare move towards political reform, an appointed parliament (legislative council) was revived in 2004. The constitution provides for an expanded house with currently 30 members appointed by the sultan and up to 15 elected MPs. However, no date has been set for elections (the latest election was held in 1962) and no further progress for political reform has been registered.

There are laws penalizing LGBTI but they are not enforced. Caning is a prescribed punishment for numerous offences. Brunei upholds a de facto moratorium on the death penalty with last execution in 1996. The last death sentence was handed out in 2010. Currently there are 10 to 15 people on death row. The following human rights problems were reported: inability of citizens to change their government; arbitrary detention; limits on freedom of speech, press, assembly, and association; restrictions on religious freedom; discrimination against women; restricted labour rights; and exploitation of foreign workers. There were no further ratifications in 2012 by Brunei of any new human rights instruments.

The EU has no delegation in Brunei. Resident Member States' Heads of Mission therefore conduct informal dialogue on HR issues when they arise. Negotiations on a Partnership and Cooperation Agreement (PCA) were formally launched in April 2012. The first negotiating round was held in December 2012, the second in March 2013 in Bandar Seri Begawan.

An EU demarche on the accession to the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (ICC) is currently in preparation. Although the government of Brunei Darussalam has not raised any objections with regard to any individual provisions of the Rome Statute nor to accession in general, the accession might conflict with the immunity of the sultan in all public and private matters granted by the Brunei constitution.

ASEAN

On 18 November, Heads of States and Governments of ASEAN adopted an ASEAN Human Rights Declaration, which is the first regional comprehensive human rights instrument in Asia, and a good basis, together with the activity of the ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights, to build upon with the Asian partners. EU HR/VP Cathy Ashton welcomed the adoption of the Declaration as an important confirmation of ASEAN's commitment to human rights while emphasising the expectation of the EU that implementation addresses any problems of compatibility with international standards, notably the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the relevant UN human rights treaties.

Myanmar/Burma

The EU opened a new chapter in its relations with Myanmar/Burma in April, 2012 by suspending restrictive measures imposed on the Government, with the exception of the arms embargo. On 28 April, the High Representative/Vice President Catherine Ashton opened an EU Office in Yangon.

The EU welcomed the by-elections on 1 April, resulting in the election of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and members of the National League for Democracy party, which were conducted in a transparent and credible way. The EU also welcomed the decision of the Government to make further changes in legislation to enable freedom of assembly and of association and to relax the control of media. President U Thein Sein used his constitutional right to proceed to a series of prisoners' releases in the course of 2012 resulting in the great majority of political detainees now being freed. The ILO resumed work with the Government with a view to eliminating forced labour.

The EU supported the establishment of a National Commission on Human Rights and helped it deal with an increasing number of cases. The EU also supported the strengthening of the role of civil society and the media. In that respect, activities included the funding of existing civil society networks and resource centres as well as the creation of new mechanisms for consultation and information sharing, training civil society organisations from the ethnic regions and political parties on human rights, good governance and public administration, and training of journalists on economic, political and election reporting. The EU funded projects to support the work programme of the ILO in the country.

The EU was again the main sponsor of the UN General Assembly Resolution on the situation of Human Rights in Myanmar, which was adopted by consensus for the first time in 2012. The resolution welcomed the substantial efforts towards political reform, democratization, national reconciliation and improvements in the situation of human rights. At the same time, it recognized the challenges ahead, including the release of remaining prisoners, human rights violations against persons belonging to ethnic minorities and addressing the underlying causes of the violence in the Rakhine State.

Concerns remained about human rights violations especially in the ethnic areas where cease-fires with most of the armed groups have already been signed. During his visit in November 2012, President Barroso inaugurated the Myanmar Peace Centre, which aims to play a crucial role in the ethnic peace process.

Cambodia

In 2012, the EU monitored carefully the Human Rights situation in Cambodia. Particular attention was given to the trials of Human Rights defenders. A statement by the spokesperson of the High Representative denounced the sentencing of Mam Sonando to a twenty year jail term, which was followed on 26 October by a resolution of the European Parliament on the Human Rights situation in the country, condemning increasing Human Rights abuses and encouraging the Cambodian government to strengthen democracy, the rule of law and respect for Human Rights and fundamental freedoms.

Ahead of the EU-Cambodia Joint Committee meeting (19-21 June), a meeting of the Joint Committee sub-group on "Institution Building, Administrative Reform, Legal Reform, Governance and Human Rights" focused on freedom of expression, the situation of human rights defenders and civil society, as well as the protection of land rights and land rights holders.

Land management, including land rights and the eviction of people living in Economic Land Concessions was under constant EU scrutiny, in cooperation with the UN, civil society and other concerned partners.

The EU closely monitored the work of the UN Special Rapporteur on the Human Rights situation in Cambodia, Professor Subedi, and voiced its concern on 26 September in the Human Rights Council on the occasion of the release of his latest report.

The EU continued to encourage legal and judicial reforms, in particular through the EU-Cambodia Co-operation Facility for Governance and Human Rights, providing technical assistance to the Cambodian Human Rights Committee and to the Ministry of Justice to support law enforcement officials through a series of training on child rights within the context of the criminal justice system. Under EIDHR, the EU continued to support a number of ongoing projects aimed at addressing access to justice and improving the rule of law. The EU provided financial support (€1.3 million) to the national side of the Extraordinary Chambers in the Court of Cambodia, as part of the EU's commitment to justice and national reconciliation.

China

2012 was marked by the 18th Party Congress and change of leadership. In the approach to the Congress, the Chinese authorities increased pressure on petitioners and human rights defenders.

The EU-China human rights dialogue, which took place in Brussels on 29 May, looked at recent developments, including: the rights of persons belonging to minorities; the treatment of refugees from North Korea; local elections; rule of law and the legal profession; freedom of expression, including the Internet; civil society; the right to housing and evictions; the one-child policy; ICCPR ratification and the National Human Rights Action Plan. The two main agenda points were criminal punishment and deprivation of liberty and, secondly, xenophobia and racial discrimination. The EU and China also reviewed co-operation in international fora and institutions. The Chinese authorities refused to hold a second round of the dialogue in 2012. Lists of individual cases were handed over to the Chinese authorities at the EU-China Summits of 14 February and 20 September, as well as in the margins of the human rights dialogue.

The EU-China human rights seminar took place in Galway, Ireland on 29-31 October. The rights of migrant workers, and the environment and the right to development were the two themes discussed.

The EU made statements regarding violations of human rights in China at the UN Human Rights Council in March, June and September, as well as at the UN 3rd Committee of the General Assembly in New York on 6 November. In these statements, the EU expressed concern at the series of self-immolations in Tibet, and urged China to ensure that the rights of persons belonging to the Tibetan minority, as well as to other minorities such as the Uyghurs, were respected. Moreover, the EU expressed concern at arbitrary detention and enforced disappearances, violations of the right to fair trial, as well as of freedom of expression and assembly and freedom of religion or belief.

The EU remained concerned at restrictions imposed on individuals seeking to exercise their right to freedom of expression or to promote human rights and made a number of statements in especially serious cases. On 4 January, the High Representative expressed her regret at the sentencing of the human rights activists Chen Wei and Chen Xi to nine and ten years in prison respectively, which followed the sentencing of the human rights lawyer Gao Zhisheng to three years imprisonment. On 16 April, the EU Delegation to China noted the EU's deep concern at the sentence of imprisonment handed down to the human rights defender Ni Yulan and her husband Dong Jiqin. The EU expressed its particular regret at the sentence in the light of Mrs Ni's poor health and called for her immediate release. Shortly after Mr Chen Guangcheng sought refuge in the United States' embassy in Beijing, the EU Delegation issued a local statement on 30 April noting that the EU had repeatedly called for the lifting of Mr Chen Guangcheng's house arrest and urged the Chinese authorities to exercise utmost restraint in dealing with Mr Chen, including avoiding harassment of his family members or any person associated with him.

The EU expressed its concerns to the Chinese authorities regarding implementation of certain amendments to the Criminal Law Procedure adopted in 2012, and in particular of its article 73 which might provide a legal basis for enforced disappearances.

As the lack of respect of the rights of persons belonging to minorities remained problematic, the High Representative delivered a comprehensive statement on the situation in Tibet to the European Parliament on 12 June and issued a declaration on 14 December 2012. In these statements, the High Representative noted that the EU was profoundly saddened by the increasing number of Tibetans committing self-immolation. The EU was concerned, at restrictions on expressions of Tibetan identity, which appeared to be giving rise to a surge of discontent in the region, and called upon the Chinese authorities to address the deep-rooted causes of the frustration of the Tibetan people and to ensure that their civil, political, economic and social and cultural rights were respected, including their right to enjoy their own culture, to practice their own religion and to use their own language. The EU called upon the Chinese authorities to respect the rights of Tibetans to peaceful assembly and expression, to act with restraint, and to release all individuals detained for taking part in peaceful demonstrations. The EU also urged the Chinese authorities to allow free access to all Tibetan autonomous areas for diplomats as well as for international journalists. The EU fully supported the statement on this issue made by the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights on 2 November.

The EU also remained concerned at the human rights situation in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region, notably extensive restrictions on expressions of cultural and religious identity.

Pressure on practitioners of the Falun Gong movement, which is considered illegal by the Chinese authorities, remained high and continued to prevent the movement from re-organising since the repressive campaign launched in 1999. The EU raised the situation with the Chinese authorities from the point of view of respect for freedom of expression and freedom of religion or belief and that of the right to a fair trial, detention conditions, re-education through labour and allegations of organ harvesting. Some of the individual cases raised by the EU involved Falun Gong practitioners.

In the course of the year, several cases drew public attention to the Re-education Through Labour (RTL) system. The EU reiterated to the Chinese authorities that the RTL system was not in line with China's international obligations.

The EU remained concerned at the extensive use of the death penalty in China, at the secrecy which surrounded executions and at continued allegations of "organ harvesting" from executed prisoners. The EU took note of a statement by the Chinese Vice-Minister of Health in March that China intended within the next five years to abolish organ donation from prisoners condemned to death; the EU will encourage any efforts by China to promote voluntary organ donation.
2012 was also marked by growing social unrest resulting from a lack of association by civil society in decision-making, in particular in relation with environmental concerns, as well as from poor working conditions. In that regard, the EU was concerned about reports of measures taken against migrant workers organisations, in particular in Shenzhen. Trafficking in human beings is an issue of particular concern. In this regards, the EU included China in the list of priority countries for co-operation in this field. The EU provides technical assistance and capacity building to China through a number of projects. Capacity building efforts continued in 2012 through a 2 million euro project funded by the European Commission on Migration Management.

The EU reiterated its calls for China to ratify the ICCPR, signed by China in 1998.

In Hong Kong, the EU continued to monitor the implementation of the 'one country, two systems' principle and the Basic Law, strongly supporting early and substantive progress towards the goal of genuine universal suffrage, consistent with all rights enshrined in the ICCPR, especially the equal right to nominate candidates. The Equal Opportunities Commission identified 3 priority groups: persons with disabilities, ethnic minorities and LGBTI. Concerns remained about the encroachment on Hong Kong's independent judiciary and the rule of law and the gradual erosion of press freedom. Finally, the EU Office organised several events, such as the European Day against the Death Penalty and a Seminar on Corporate Social Responsibility.

Taiwan

Following the adoption of ICCPR and ICESCR provisions into Taiwan's domestic law in 2009, a Human Rights Consultative Committee was established in 2010 and published in April 2012 its first Human Rights report, assessing the compatibility of Taiwan's legal framework with the provisions of the two covenants. This whole process has been very positive and the report contains useful policy recommendations. The death penalty remains the most serious human rights concern in Taiwan.

The EU deplored the series of executions conducted in December 2012, following those in 2010 and 2011, which broke a *de facto* moratorium observed during the five previous years. The HR/VP called on Taiwanese authorities to take concrete steps towards reducing the use of capital punishment and work towards the resumption of the moratorium. Related concerns have been repeatedly voiced by EU representatives in contacts with the Taiwanese authorities.

Through a series of exchanges of experience, advocacy and outreach events, the EU remained engaged with local authorities and civil society, focusing on activities aimed at promoting the abolition of death penalty (including organization of seminars and trainings for judicial workers and law students, and support to the NGO Taiwan Alliance to End the Death Penalty).

India

India underwent the second peer review under the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) in May 2012, preceded by an important consultation process in particular by the National Human Rights Commission. The Government accepted, in September 2012, 67 out of 169 recommendations, thus committing to take action in important fields such as women and children rights, socio-economic development and poverty alleviation. However, recommendations in some crucial areas (human rights violations under the special legislations, the death penalty, or the situation of human rights defenders) were not accepted. The EU continued to engage with the Government of India (GoI) on the commitments it has taken in the UPR.

The United Nations Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions visited India in March 2012. At the end of the visit, he called on the GoI to continue to take measures to fight impunity in cases of extrajudicial executions, and communal and traditional killings. The EU maintained its dialogue with the GoI on the Special Rapporteur's recommendations on the so called 'fake encounters' and the issue of impunity of security forces.

In November 2012, India resumed executions, after a break of 8 years, with the hanging of Ajmal Kasab, the only terrorist of the 26/11/2008 Mumbai attack caught alive. HRVP Ashton issued a statement[12], recalling that the EU is opposed to the use of death penalty in all cases and under any circumstances, and calling on the Indian authorities to reintroduce the moratorium on executions as a first step towards definitive abolition of capital punishment.

The situation of women, in particular violence against them, came back to the forefront in the wake of the 16 December 2012 Delhi gang rape. Following the public outrage, the Government appointed a a three-member commission chaired by Justice J. S. Verma to look into possible amendments to the Criminal Law to provide for quicker trial and enhanced punishment for criminals committing sexual assault of extreme nature against women.

[12] http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_data/docs/pressdata/EN/foraff/133681.pdf

In the field of child rights, India took important steps to implement ILO Conventions No 138 (Minimum Age Convention, 1973) and No 182 (Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labour, 1999) through the introduction in Parliament, at the end of 2012, of an amendment bill to the Child Labour Act to prohibit employment of children in all occupations and processes to facilitate their enrolment in schools under the Right to Education Act, and to prohibit employment of adolescents (14-18 years of age) in hazardous occupations. Moreover, the protection of children from sexual offences was increased through a new Act entered into force in November 2012, providing for stringent punishment, as per the gravity of the offence, with a maximum term of life imprisonment.

Online freedom of expression remains an issue with the continued application of provisions of the the Information Technology Act, 2008 assessed to be harsher than similar provisions in the Indian Penal Code for sending, by means of a computer resource or a communication device, information that is grossly offensive or has menacing character. These provisions were misused in a number of instances and have led to the arrests of innocent people for politically or personally motives.

Throughout the year, the EU continued its close monitoring of the human rights situation, including through an increased engagement with civil society activists and a considerably stepped up outreach to civil society organisations in the individual Indian states, a necessary exercise as the situation vastly differs from state to state. However, the annual local EU-India human rights Dialogue did not take place in 2012 due to several postponements

The EU addressed in particular:

- the need for ratification by India of the **UN Convention against Torture** (signed in 1995) through the adoption of the draft Prevention of Torture Bill. In an event on 26 June, organised by the EU Delegation in New Delhi in the International Day in Support of Victims of Torture, the Law Minister pledged publicly to take up the draft bill with his colleagues from Home Affairs and Parliamentary Affairs. An on-going EIDHR funded project addresses the issue of delivery of justice to torture victims in the State of Uttar Pradesh.

- the **death penalty** through high-level diplomatic action and the above mentioned statement on the resumption of executions by India in November 2012. The EU also started contributing more proactively to the public debate in India through a public event to mark 10 October World and European Day against the Death Penalty and newspaper submissions in Delhi, organised by the EU Delegation, which are planned to be continued in 2013.

The situation of **Human Rights Defenders** through a number of communications to the National Human Rights Commission on specific cases. As part of its local strategy on HRDs, the EU submits regular requests for updates on a limited number of individual cases during the annual human rights dialogue.

The EU participated in conferences and debates related to **women's rights** and had regular consultations with women's rights activists. Regular contacts were maintained as well with members of advisory bodies such as the National Commission for Women. Moreover, the EU Delegation has been reporting regularly on women's issues. The EU also has taken up women's rights as a central issue in the recent Universal Periodic Review of India, where 6 EU Member States raised the situation of women, India's reservations to some articles of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women/CEDAW and the accession to the Optional Protocol to CEDAW and made relevant recommendations. The Delegation participates in the UN Women led GCS (Gender Co-ordination mechanism) for discussing gender equality issues in the context of sector/macro policy dialogue.

Child rights were addressed mainly through the EU's work with NGOs. The EU is part of the Core Group set up by the Ministry for Women and Child Development to look into the issue of Child Marriage. An EU project with UNICEF and Ministry of Women and Child Development focuses on the prevention of child marriage. The EU is also supporting NGOs working in the field of child rights to create an effective civil society network in South Asia. Other projects focus on children affected by insurgencies and in conflict with the law, internal and cross-border child trafficking; child labour in home-based craft production; child-inclusive governance through child participation in two of poorest states.

On the **rights of indigenous people**, the EU was involved in the monitoring through local NGO partnerships of the implementation of the Forest Rights Act and of legislations guaranteeing and extending tribal rights at local level.

The European Parliament addressed the caste discrimination in a Resolution adopted on December 13, 2012.

The EU also continued to monitor closely the application of special legislations, such as the Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act, in insurgent areas, which are continuously at the source of allegations of widespread human rights violations by the armed and security forces.

Finally, the EU launched new projects under the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights in the fields of combating trafficking of women and children, tribal rights, access to justice for vulnerable groups in conflict-affected states, rights of disabled persons, gender rights in local governance and human and social rights in relation with trade agreements.

Indonesia

In May, the situation of human rights in Indonesia was subject to Universal Periodic Review (UPR) in the UN Human Rights Council. Indonesia accepted 150 out of 186 UPR recommendations.

The third round of the EU-Indonesia Human Rights Dialogue took place in May in Jakarta. It provided an opportunity for open and constructive exchanges on a wide range of issues such as non-discrimination, freedom of religion, detainees' rights, women's rights, press freedom and cooperation in multilateral fora. The EU also welcomed the inclusion, in Indonesia's National Human Rights Action Plan, of a reference to moving towards the ratification of the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (ICC).

Throughout the year, the EU paid particular attention to freedom of religion and belief as well as minority groups. The EU Delegation in Jakarta held regular meetings with minority groups and human rights organisations working on the issue. It continued to strengthen its cooperation with the country's largest Islamic organisation, Nahdlatul Ulama, to foster interfaith dialogue and understanding.

In October, the EU organised a conference in Jakarta on "Non-Discrimination: From Principles to Practice", which brought together civil society representatives from Europe and Indonesia to exchange experience on issues such as religious discrimination, the rights of people with disabilities and discrimination based upon sexual orientation. Participants produced a set of recommendations which will feed into the 2013 session of the EU-Indonesia Human Rights Dialogue.

The European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR) supported fourteen projects in 2012, covering a broad spectrum of issues, including accountability, children's rights, freedom of religion and the protection of particularly vulnerable groups. The EU's Policy Guidelines on Human Rights have been translated into Indonesian and made available on the EU Delegation's website.

The EU welcomed Indonesia's decision to abstain in the vote on the Resolution on a Moratorium on the use of the Death Penalty at the UN Third Committee.

The EU continued to monitor, through regular meetings and missions on the ground, the human rights situation in sensitive areas such as Papua, where there are specific concerns regarding truth and reconciliation processes, freedom of expression and issues linked to special autonomy.

Japan

In the field of Human rights, Japan is a longstanding partner in international fora and with which the EU has a fruitful dialogue.

As regards human rights issues in Japan, in 2012, the EU focused its work in the area of the death penalty as Japan resumed executions (7 for the whole year) after a nearly 20 month interruption. There were three rounds of executions in Japan in 2012 (March, August and September), in contrast with 2011 which had been the first execution-free year since the early 1990s. In total, 8 people were executed under the DPJ administration (7 people in 2012).

HR/VP issued a statement after Japan executed three inmates on 29 March. In addition, the Head of Delegation carried out a demarche with the Minister of Justice in Tokyo. The Spokesperson of HR/VP issued a statement following two executions on 3 August and, subsequently, the issue was raised by the EU Delegation directly with Justice Minister Taki. HR/VP issued a statement following two executions on 27 September. In addition, Ambassadors of the EU in Tokyo issued a statement on the occasion of the World Day against the Death Penalty.

The EU actively engaged with the Japanese Government and civil society about the death penalty issue. Regular meetings were held with members of the Parliamentary League for the abolition of the death penalty. The EU Delegation in Tokyo organised an international symposium entitled ¨Towards Death Penalty Abolition: European Experience and Asian Perspectives¨ in April contributing to the domestic debate on the death penalty in Japan. In addition, the Delegation in Tokyo, in coordination with Member States, issued an open letter in the Japanese press on the occasion of the European/ International Day against the Death Penalty on 10 October.

As part of Japan and the EU's shared commitment to promote the respect for human rights worldwide, consultations on human rights were held in October. There was good cooperation with Japan on resolutions on DPRK (reference to abduction issue) and Myanmar (pressing for softer resolution) in the framework of the UN General Assembly. Political impasse in the Japanese legislative (the Diet) did not permit Japan to accede to the Hague Convention on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction in 2012 but Japan reiterated its commitment to implementing the Convention "fully and faithfully".

In the area of criminal justice –which is also linked to the issue of death penalty- judicial procedures still rely heavily on confessions of indicted persons. Prison conditions remain an area of concern (in particular access to health services). The EU should aim at sharing expertise and identifying best practices in these areas.

Japan was reviewed under the second cycle of the Universal Periodic Review at the UN Human Rights Council in October. Japan received altogether 174 recommendations, which it has provided with a reply at the 22nd session of the HRC in March 2013.

Korea (*Republic *of)

Respect for universal principles of human rights is an essential element of the EU-Korea Framework Agreement that was agreed along with the Free Trade Agreement and the declaration of a Strategic Partnership in 2010.

At the EU-RoK Summit in March 2012, the EU leaders and President of the Republic of Korea affirmed that bilateral consultations would be held to strengthen cooperation in the field of human rights.

This commitment at the highest level was transformed into substantive action during the course of the year. The Republic of Korea voted with the EU in key resolutions at the UN Human Rights Council and the UNGA Third Committee, (with the exception of the Resolution for a Moratorium on the Death Penalty on which it abstained). Agreement was reached on the modalities for EU-Korea Human Rights Consultations that will facilitate even more effective cooperation in the UN and other frameworks than current informal channels. Senior human rights officials from the EU participated in the ASEM Informal Seminar on Human Rights and Information Technology which took place in Seoul in June 2012.

Moreover, in the framework of implementation of the trade and sustainable development chapter of the EU-Korea Free Trade Agreement, in June 2012 the EU side, including social partners and other civil society representatives, discussed with the Korean counterparts the prospects for a future ratification by the Republic of Korea of the remaining ILO fundamental Conventions (No. 29 and 105 on forced labour, as well as No. 87 and 98 on freedom of association and the right to collective bargaining). The meeting provided also an opportunity to discuss situation of trade unions in the Republic of Korea.

The EU Delegation and EU Member State embassies in Seoul engaged in consultation with government departments, the National Human Rights Commission of Korea and a wide range of civil society groups prior to the second Universal Periodic Review of the Republic of Korea in October 2012. Following these consultations, EU Member States recommended action on a number of issues. These recommendations included the need to transform the 14 year-old moratorium on executions into legal abolition of capital punishment, to end the ongoing imprisonment of over 600 conscientious objectors to military service, to improve gender equality and measures to ensure the rights of unmarried mothers and children.

The EU Delegation and EU Member States undertook specific action to support progress on these and other issues throughout 2012.

The EU Head of Delegation raised the issue of the death penalty with the Justice Minister. In a meeting to launch an abolition bill at the National Assembly, the Head of Delegation set out the key reasons why the death penalty could not be considered as a more effective deterrent to crime than other punishments. These arguments were repeated in an op-ed placed by the Delegation in one of the country's most widely circulated newspapers on the occasion of World Day against the Death Penalty.

Close consultation was maintained with representatives of religious groups in regard to court cases in which imprisoned conscientious objectors are insisting that the government must follow the recommendations of the UN Human Rights Committee to provide a civilian alternative to military service.

The EU welcomed the political prioritization placed on economic and social rights by Korean political parties during 2012 and the interest in European social models. The EU Centre at Hankuk University organized a forum on gender equality. EU Member States embassies used high-level visits to highlight problems faced by unmarried parents and their children. Problems with the birth registration system were also addressed during the year.

DPRK

Promoting improvements in the human rights situation in DPRK remains a core issue of the EU's policy towards the country.The EU is very concerned by the continuing systematic, widespread and grave violations of civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights in the country. The EU has been unequivocal in its condemnation of the situation. This EU expresses its concerns at every occasion with North Korean representatives and in the context of the EU's annual political dialogue with DPRK, which exceptionally did not take place in 2012.

The EU continued to draw the attention of the UN Human Rights Council and the UN General Assembly to the persistent critical human rights situation in the DPRKOn 19 March 2012, the EU co-sponsored (with Japan) a Resolution by the UN Human Rights Council in which it expressed its very serious concern at the ongoing grave, widespread and systematic human rights violations in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. Similarly, a UN General Assembly Resolution was adopted on 29 March 2012. The consensual adoption of the last HRC and UNGA resolutions on the DPRK sent a strong signal. The EU further supported the extension by one year of the mandate of the UN special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in DPRK. As a result of the EU's active role in the UN, the DPRK has refused since 2003 to hold the specific EU-DPRK human rights dialogue, initiated in 2001.

On 23 May 2012 the European Parliament adopted a Joint Resolution on the situation of North Korean refugees, underlining its concern about their plight. The EU urged DPRK to tackle the root causes of refugees and to ensure that any refugees returned to DPRK are able to return in safety and dignity. Besides the above approach, the EU continues to de-couple its humanitarian aid to the North Korean people from political considerations regarding the leadership in Pyongyang. In September 2012 the European Commission provided € 350.000 in direct aid to victims of severe flooding in the country. Where possible, the EU attempts to outreach to the most vulnerable groups in DPRK society such as disabled and young children.

Laos

The EU cooperated with Laos on a range of activities linked to the Asia Europe Meeting (ASEM), from media training to support for the participation of civil society representatives at the Asia Europe People Forum in October 2012.

In the framework of a continuing process of dialogue on Human Rights, the EU organised in March 2012, with the UNDP, a seminar on Corporate Social Responsibilities with 200 participants coming from the Lao Administration, the private sector and civil society.

Eight projects related to human rights were implemented in 2012: six funded under the EIDHR and two from a contribution agreement between the EU and UNDP. The EIDHR projects focussed on the implementation of the Human Rights Strategy; they include support to the nascent civil society in Laos, with a particular emphasis on activities related to the rights of the child, gender rights, rights of people with disabilities; and disadvantaged minority groups. The EU was instrumental, together with the UNDP, in supporting the increasing voice of the National Assembly on legislation on international Human Rights, and to make the Government accountable for its policies.

The EU also supported the Government in dissemination of information about human rights and capacity building for translating international obligations into national laws with the overall objective of consolidating the rule of law.

Two demarches were conducted in 2012, for the ICC ratification in June, and the Death Penalty resolution at the UNGA.

The situation of Human rights defenders was closely monitored throughout the year, and the EU was particularly attentive to incidents related to press freedom, in particular with the closure in January 2012 of a popular radio show inviting listeners to voice their opinions live on air.

The end of the year was unfortunately marked by a brutal reversal of trend in human rights, with the expulsion of an INGO representative, and the disappearance of a prominent civil society activist Mr. Sombath Somphone. The EU played a leading role in mobilising international attention regarding this case. A statement by the spokesperson of EU High Representative on 21 December 2012 expressed concern and encouraged the Lao authorities in their efforts to investigate this case.

Malaysia

Negotiations towards an EU-Malaysia Partnership and Cooperation Agreement (PCA) progressed in 2012. The draft agreement contains a human rights clause.

The EU's main human rights priorities in Malaysia in 2012 were the promotion of the abolition of the death penalty and the ratification of the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (ICC). The EU continued to render its support to the EU citizens being on a death row in Malaysia. The EU also stepped up its engagement with Malaysia as a member of the UN Human Rights Council.

During the year, the EU's Human Rights Working Group met with a number civil society organisations working on children's rights, human trafficking, freedom of expression and electoral reform.

In January 2012, the EU Delegation in Kuala Lumpur delivered a demarche to promote the ratification of the Optional Protocols of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC). In April, Malaysia ratified the Protocols on the "Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography' and 'Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict". The EU expressed in December its concerns about Malaysia's reservations.

On 21 February 2012 the EU Head of Delegation delivered a demarche on the deportation to Saudi Arabia of the Saudi journalist Hamza Kashgari who had posted a Twitter message about the Prophet Mohammad. The EU Delegation called on Malaysia to halt the deportation, as Mr. Kashgari could face the death penalty for apostasy. The EU reminded Malaysia of its stand on freedom of expression, the death penalty and the rule of law. Mr. Kashgari had been deported to Saudi Arabia on 12 February.

In March, the EU Delegation organised, together with the Bar Council and the National Human Rights Commission (SUHAKAM), a public event to promote the abolition of the death penalty and a University Students' debating competition with the participation of seven universities. The campaign which was supported by Malaysia's Minister for Law and Parliamentary Affairs, culminated in a Grand Finale held in the Malaysian Parliament on 10 December, Human Rights day.

The European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR) supported 6 projects in 2012, relating to the UN Convention on disability, education for stateless children, and the rights of indigenous people. The EU Delegation convened a meeting with Malaysia's human rights NGOs to identify priorities for the next EIDHR Call for Proposal which will be published early 2013.

Maldives

In 2012, the Maldives experienced a serious political crisis which led to the resignation of the first democratically-elected President Mohamed Nasheed in February 2012. This transfer of power under controversial circumstances prompted weeks of political unrest with numerous human rights violations. In August 2012, the Commission of National Inquiry (CoNI), supported by the Commonwealth and the United Nations (UN), concluded that transfer of power was "not a coup d'état" and made recommendations on police brutality and other human rights issues. The Maldivian human rights situation was discussed at the UN Human Rights Committee in July 2012. In October, the prosecutor general charged former president Nasheed for the illegal arrest and detention of the judge Abdulla in January 2012. If convicted, Nasheed could be barred from the presidential elections.

The European Union (EU) and Maldives have no formal framework for political and human rights dialogue in place, nor has the EU or any EU Member States a permanent presence in the country. The EU's diplomatic response is based on interactions with the Maldivian political and civil society actors from Colombo, Sri Lanka; combined with 2-3 high level missions per year to the Maldives. Strategic discussions with international organisations, such as the Commonwealth, also take place in Brussels. The European Parliament delegation visited in the Maldives in April 2012.

The Maldives is one of the EU's democracy pilot countries, which means that the Union is aiming for a coherent analysis and action in support of democratic processes in the country. The EU's strategic objective is to support the democratic process in the Maldives. The EU aims to ensure that the presidential elections, scheduled for September 2013, will be credible and transparent in the Maldives. The EU has programmed an Election Expert Mission.

Currently, there are very few human rights related interventions, as the Maldives does not benefit from the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights country based scheme. However, there are two projects, one on local conflict mediation and another one on elections campaign financing, financed from the global funds. The Development Cooperation Instrument country programme supports actions to address the country's serious drug related social problems and the climate change challenges.

During the political crisis in 2012, the EU has issued several statements on the situation in the Maldives: in January, the EU Heads of Mission expressed their concern on the arrest of Judge Abdulla. The EU also issued several statements on the transfer of power (February) and on the need for political reconciliation over continued political unrest in the Maldives (March). In July, the EU issued a statement on the escalation of political tensions in the Maldives, and in August on the publication of the Report of the CoNI. In October, a statement was issued on the arrest of former President Nasheed. The EU also raised the issue of death penalty with the authorities.

Mongolia

Mongolia's last parliamentary election took place on 28 June 2012. It brought to power the largest opposition party (Democratic Party – DP). Currently Mongolia is governed by a coalition of DP and Justice Coalition. The High Representative issued a statement noting that legislative elections were another important step in the strengthening of democracy. The election went smoothly despite previous political tensions inter alia the arrest and conviction of former President Enkhbayar on corruption charges. The spokesperson of HR/VP issued a statement on this case calling on the authorities to act with full transparency and respect for democratic principles, rule of law and human rights, and at the same time renewing the confidence of the EU in Mongolian institutions.

The new election law was adopted in December 2011 with the aim of addressing concerns over transparency in vote casting and disproportionate representation. A quota requiring 20% of candidates to be women was introduced which led to an increase in female representation (from 3 to 9 MPs). Electronic voting machines were introduced for the first time just before the election. The equipment caused some irregularities which made control counts necessary in some instances.

In January 2012, Mongolia ratified the Second Optional Protocol to the ICCPR aiming at the abolition of the death penalty. Corruption remains a major problem at all branches and at all levels of government, particularly within the judiciary, customs service and law enforcement agencies. Conditions in prisons are poor and there are reports about the use of torture, coercion and threats by law enforcement agencies. The government has announced plans to amend the Criminal Code and to define torture as a crime in line with the UN Convention against Torture. To address those concerns 3 projects funded through EIDHR were contracted in 2012: support for and promotion of respect for human rights in Mongolian prisons with a focus on the prevention of torture and cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment; support for strengthening the rights of persons of different sexual orientation in Mongolia and their families and human rights promotion through documentary films among secondary and vocational school students and teachers. Mongolia was also a co-sponsor of an EU action at UNGA 67 calling for a moratorium on the use of the death penalty in 2012 and with the EU was co-organizer of a UN high-level panel on the death penalty abolition.

In 2012 Mongolia became a member of the OSCE. Through 2012-2013 it has also chaired the Community of Democracies (CD) focusing on Education for Democracy and advancing CD regional cooperation, strengthening of civil society, exchange of experiences, and zero tolerance to corruption.

Mongolia is also a pilot country for the implementation of the Council Conclusion on Democracy support in the EU's External Relations and several projects related to HR are supported through the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights.

Nepal

Nepal ranks 157/187 in the 2011 Human Development Index. It is the second poorest country in Asia after Afghanistan. Nepal has, however, made significant progress on reducing income poverty over the last 14 years. On the right to an adequate standard of living recent data suggests that poverty has declined from 42% in 1996 to 24.8% in 2010. Progress on rights to health and education has been significant over the last decade; the percentage of children (ages 1-2) vaccinated increased from 83% in 2006 to 87% in 2011. However, despite these positive trends recent political events are provoking more uncertainty on social and economic rights.

Despite commitments made in the Comprehensive Peace Accord of 2006, successive Governments in Nepal (GoN) have not yet instituted transitional justice mechanisms and by the end of 2012, no-one had yet been prosecuted in a civilian court for a serious conflict-related crime. GoN and the security forces continue to shield and even promote individuals who are implicated in conflict-related crimes, with several controversial promotions making headlines in 2012, despite a Supreme Court ruling in August 2012 that ordered that measures be put in place to regulate promotions. An ordinance for the creation of a single Commission for Truth, Reconciliation and Disappearances was forwarded in 2012 to the Office of the President. The content of the ordinance raises concern among human rights organisations, the diplomatic community and the UN. The EU maintained its dialogue with the GoN that serious human rights violations of international human rights and humanitarian law cannot be subject to amnesty or forced reconciliation.

The National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) has been significantly compromised by a new Act passed in January 2012 that has diminished its independence and autonomy. The capacity of the Supreme Court has been severely constrained since the dissolution of the Constituent Assembly in May 2012, as the appointment of new justices has been prevented by the absence of a legislative body to conduct the requisite parliamentary hearings. The EU expressed continued concern that erosion of national institutions and vacancies across various constitutional bodies have weakened democracy and the rule of law in Nepal.

Throughout the year, the EU continued its close monitoring of the human rights situation in Nepal, including by an increased engagement with human rights activists, policy dialogue, and public outreach.

The EU addressed in particular:

- impunity and transitional justice, highlighting the Government of Nepal's obligation to create transitional justice mechanisms that meet international standards and to combat the prevailing culture of impunity, as well as the publication of several statements on these issues.
- the situation of Human Rights Defenders in Nepal through meetings with human rights activists and bi-annual meetings of the EU Working Group for the protection of Human Rights Defenders chaired by the EU Delegation.
- caste-based discrimination as well as gender-based violence and discrimination through continued support to civil society projects as well as engagement with the GoN on the commitments it has made at the Universal Periodic Review in 2011.

Furthermore, the EU contributed pro-actively to the debate on human rights in Nepal through a half-day event with civil society organisations to mark Human Rights Day on 10th December 2012. On the same day, the EU missions published a joint op-ed in a leading national newspaper, paying tribute to Nepal's Human Rights Defenders and expressing commitment to inclusion, truth, justice and reconciliation in Nepal.

Finally, the EU launched eight new projects in 2012 under the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights in the field of combating trafficking of children and women, gender equality, young people's rights, caste-based discrimination and other social discrimination issues. Political participation, transparency, accountability and freedom of expression are also being addressed through those projects.

Pakistan

Pakistan has improved its human rights legislation. A significant area of new legislation enacted by Pakistan was the creation in May 2012 of an independent National Commission for Human Rights in accordance with the Paris principles. At the UN Human Rights Council UPR on Pakistan in October 2012, Pakistan's stance at the UPR was regarded as constructive. Delegations commented positively on the creation of the independent national human rights commission, the ratification of some international human rights treaties and the de facto moratorium on the death penalty. The delegations made 165 recommendations ranging from the blasphemy laws to the treatment of minorities, the situation of human rights defenders and discrimination against women, among other issues. Pakistan agreed to consider 164 of the recommendations.

The overall implementation and enforcement capability of civilian Pakistani judicial and human rights institutions has improved but remains at a weak level. 2012 saw an intensification of sectarian violence, particularly directed against the Shiite minority of the Hazaras in Quetta. A high level of extremist attacks has persisted in particular in the north-west, Baluchistan and Karachi. The perpetrators of many of these have not yet been brought to justice.

On 6 February 2012 the EU-Pakistan Joint Commission's Sub-Group on Governance, Human Rights and Migration met for an exchange of views on civil, political and human rights in Pakistan. The discussion included: freedom of religion and belief; treatment of religious minorities; women's rights; access to justice; the death penalty; signature and ratification of international human rights conventions and human rights cooperation in the UN.

Human rights are a key component of the EU-Pakistan Strategic Dialogue which was launched by High Representative Ashton with Foreign Minister Khar in June 2012. The strategic dialogue will oversee the implementation of the EU-Pakistan 5-year Engagement Plan, under which human rights is a priority. During the HR's visit to Pakistan she emphasized the need for strengthened democratic institutions, good governance and respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms and raised EU concerns related to freedom of religion and belief, rights of persons belonging to minorities, women rights and the death penalty.

Throughout 2012, the EU urged Pakistan to make further progress on human rights, and has encouraged the implementation of international human rights conventions to which Pakistan is party and the withdrawal of reservations. Under its new GSP Regulation the EU offers preferences to developing countries ('GSP+') with this objective in view. The EU raised awareness of GSP+ criteria in meetings, press releases and at a trade network event in Karachi.

The blasphemy case against a 14-year old Christian disabled girl, Rimsha Masih, accused by her neighbour of burning pages from the Koran in August 2012, and the shooting of the 14-year old education activist Malala Yousufzai by the Taliban in October provoked global outcry. The case against Rimsha was subsequently shown to be a fabrication and was dismissed. The High Representative strongly condemned the aggression against Malala as an assault both on basic human values and against all Human Rights Defenders in Pakistan and emphasized that the EU supports education for all and stands firmly by those who promote this essential cause. On 26 October, the European Parliament adopted a resolution on the discrimination against girls in Pakistan, in particular the case of Malala Yousafzai.

The EU continued to monitor and raise concerns about these and other cases, including that of Asia Bibi, a Christian woman accused of blasphemy and in custody for over two years, with the authorities throughout the year. A human rights defender event was organised in November 2012 to exchange views on the current human rights situation in Pakistan and how the EU could better support their work and efforts. Activists from across the country participated. Among the most frequently raised concerns were the gap between relative legislative progress and the actual implementation on the ground, the shrinking space for tolerance and freedom of expression, women's rights, rights of persons belonging to religious minorities and children's rights (including increase in cases of child sexual abuse and hate content in school curricula) as well as social and economic rights.

In 2012 the EU delivered a number of demarches to raise the issue of death penalty. The MS and the EU Delegation in Pakistan carried out jointly and bilaterally a number of intensive demarches on the death penalty in Pakistan to reverse decisions that were announced to execute a number of Pakistanis in June and September. The decisions on executions were postponed, apparently indefinitely.The hanging of a Pakistani soldier in Punjab on 15 November 2012 ended the unofficial moratorium on death penalty that had been in place in the country since 2008. According to the Government the execution had been carried out under pressure from military authorities and should be seen as exceptional. In a statement, the High Representative deeply regretted the execution, highlighting that it went against the global abolitionist trend and undercut the recent government announcement which had raised the possible introduction of legislation to abolish the death penalty. She called on the authorities to reintroduce the moratorium as a first step.

Through its development portfolio, the EU continued cooperation with law enforcement agencies, building the capacity through training including on effective protection of human rights. In 2012 the EU also started collaboration for improving Parliamentary performance (support to the National Assembly and the Senate) and the consolidation of democracy in Pakistan through support for credible, inclusive and transparent elections involving national and international civil society organisations and networks. An EU exploratory mission to assess the feasibility of deploying a 2013 Election Observation Mission took place in November 2012. Finally, in 2012 a new 'Support to democratic institutions' programme including a human rights component was prepared. The overall objective of the programme is to support the consolidation of the democratic process in the country by strengthening its democratic institutions. The human rights component aims to enhance the promotion and protection of human rights through assistance to the Government and the human rights institutions at federal and provincial level for increasing its capacity and fulfil its international human rights obligations.

Philippines

The EU continued to support human rights defenders and the reform of criminal justice. The EU Delegation in Manila monitored several cases of human rights violations with the Government of the Philippines as well as civil society organisations. It organised a high-profile annual meeting with human rights defenders and launched a new "*Justice for All*" Programme (€10 Million), which will aim to enhance access to justice and support the fight against impunity. The EP adopted on 14 June 2012 a Resolution on extra-judicial killings and enforced disappearances in the Philippines.

The EU and the Philippines signed on 11 July 2012 a new Partnership and Cooperation Agreement (PCA), which includes a joint commitment to strengthen dialogue and cooperation in human rights, governance and the rule of law.

In 2012, the Philippines ratified a number of international human rights related instruments, including the Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (OPCAT), and ILO Convention No. 189 on Decent Work for Domestic Workers. The Government also adopted an Anti-Enforced Disappearance Act, becoming the first Asian country to criminalize enforced disappearances. In May 2012, the Philippines undertook the Universal Periodic Review, with a particular focus on extra-judicial killings, human rights defenders and women and children's rights. In November 2012 the Philippines received the UN Special Rapporteur on Trafficking in Persons as well as the Committee on Elimination of Discrimination Against Women .

Singapore

Negotiations towards an EU-Singapore Partnership and Cooperation Agreement (PCA) progressed in 2012. The draft agreement contains a human rights clause.

The Delegation for ASEAN of the European Parliament visited Singapore in May 2012. Human rights issues and the death penalty in particular were covered in the meetings with their Singaporean interlocutors. The death penalty remained a top priority for the EU in its relations with Singapore. The EU Delegation in Singapore hosted an Informal Dialogue with local NGOs on human rights.

An EU demarche on the death penalty was delivered in Singapore focusing on the case of Yong Vui Kong, a Malaysian death row inmate convicted for a drug-related offence on 04 July 2012. The demarche underlined that the particulars of this case are in direct violation of the minimum standards applicable to persons facing execution, since the committed crime is not considered a most serious crime by the EU, and made specific reference to the Singaporean legislation.

Following a year-long review on the death penalty, in July 2012 the Singaporean government proposed changes to its mandatory death penalty for drug trafficking and murder, abolishing the mandatory death penalty for low-level drug couriers who co-operate with police and homicide cases where there was no intention to kill. Executions have been halted since July 2011.

The EU Delegation organised a Human Rights Day Seminar on "Regional Approaches to Human Rights in Europe and Southeast Asia" on 10 December 2012. The Keynote speaker was Mr. Rafendi DJAMIN, Representative of Indonesia to the ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights (AICHR). The newly appointed Representative of Singapore to AICHR, Ambassador CHAN Heng Chee, delivered the closing remarks. The Seminar brought together academics from Asia and Europe, officials, diplomats and numerous representatives of civil society, allowing for unusually candid discussions.

Sri Lanka

The human rights and governance situation deteriorated in Sri Lanka in 2012 with serious attacks on the rule of law and the independence of the judiciary. Human Rights Defenders (HRD) and independent journalists faced harassment and enforced disappearances still occurred. Despite some progress in economic reconstruction and the return of Internally Displaced Persons in the north, very little efforts have been made in reconciliation and in addressing the root causes of the conflict.

At **the United Nations Human Rights Council** in March 2012, the United States sponsored a resolution, supported by the European Union (EU) Member States, urging the Government to make progress on reconciliation.

The human rights situation in Sri Lanka was reviewed at the **Universal Periodic Review (UPR)** in November 2012. The Government of Sri Lanka rejected around half of the critical recommendations made at the UPR.

The Cooperation Agreement on Partnership and Development, signed in 1995, provides the basis for the European Union cooperation with Sri Lanka. However, in 2012, there was no formal forum for political dialogue with Sri Lanka, given that no Joint Commission meeting has taken place since 2008. The EU's policy towards Sri Lanka is characterised by **"cautious re-engagement",** while also expressing concerns on the worrying human rights situation.

The EU human rights working group engaged with HRDs and civil society, including through an annual meeting and regular thematic briefings, observation of trials, and protection of HRDs and journalists. The European Union also raised the issue of the death penalty with the authorities. The **European Parliament** delegation visited in Sri Lanka in May 2012.

The European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights and **Non-State Actors** budget line financed several projects in Sri Lanka. The **Development Cooperation Instrument** country programme focused on rehabilitation and livelihood programmes for the most vulnerable groups, including women and children, in the conflict affected areas in the north and east.

In 2012, the EU issued several **statements**. These include the EU statement urging the Government to implement the recommendations of the Lessons Learnt and Reconciliation Commission report in February 2012; the EU Heads of Mission statement on attacks against freedom of expression (after closure of websites) in July 2012 as well as the EU Heads of Mission statement on the rule of law and judiciary in December 2012; followed by a declaration of the High Representative on behalf of the EU on the impeachment of Chief Justice in January 2013.

Thailand

In line with EU guidelines on Human Rights Defenders and the EU Delegation's local implementation strategy, the EU Delegation in Thailand organised two separate civil society consultations: the first with Human Rights defenders and civil society organisations which cover general human rights issues (31 January) and the second with Human Rights defenders and civil society organisations which specialise in advocacy on Human Rights in the Deep South (03 February). In total, representatives of more than 20, mainly Bangkok based, civil society organisations took part. The exchange was warmly welcomed.

The EU advocacy work in general has been noticed and appreciated. The attendees underscored that the visibility given to human rights defenders through trial observations has provided defendants with moral support and has been significant in ensuring they receive a fair trial. The EU Delegation further reached out to community-based human rights defenders in remote parts of Thailand. Human rights defenders reported legal intimidations in the context of land ownership disputes and lack of community consultation of infrastructure projects affecting the livelihood of indigenous and local communities, an issue which the EU has taken up with the Government. [During a visit by a delegation of MEPs to the North of Thailand on 30-31 August, MEPs also engaged with community-based Human Rights defenders.

Furthermore representatives of the EU Delegation and of EU Member States' Embassies observed court hearings of two prominent *lese majeste* defendants, Chiranuch Premchaiporn award-winning online editor, sentenced for contravening the Computer Crimes Act to a one year suspended jail term and Somyot Pruksakasemsuk, sentenced to 11 years for lèse-majesté and defamation on 23 January 2013. The EU issued a local Heads of Missions' statement [expressing deep concern about the damaging effects of the guilty sentence on the freedom of expression in Thailand, for criminalising intermediaries for content posted by other internet users on websites.

The EU Delegation carried out a two-day workshop with the Thai Ministry of Foreign Affairs on migration management on 13-14 June 2012, in which parties shared their experience of good practice and migration challenges. Topics included asylum and refugee policy, human trafficking and border management and control issues. In constructive discussions, the Government and EU identified border management issues and human trafficking as potential areas for further cooperation.

In line with EU policy on the death penalty and as an EU priority for its relations with Thailand, the EU Delegation supported a seminar organised by the Union of Civil Liberties on 12 December, which sought to compare progress toward abolition across the ASEAN region. Despite an effective moratorium on executions in place since 2009, Thailand is second only to Malaysia in terms of the number of prisoners facing the death penalty, with approximately 600 compared to Malaysia's 900. Public attitudes are being presented as a major obstacle to abolition.,

On 10 September, the EU High Representative Catherine Ashton issued a statement welcoming the decision of Thailand to abolish the death penalty for juvenile offenders.

Timor Leste

10 years after independence, 2012 saw two elections (presidential and parliamentary) successfully carried out by the Timorese authorities, and represented a milestone in the country's progress towards stable democracy. In July, the EU deployed an Election Observation Mission and the European Parliament sent a delegation to observe parliamentary elections. Both electoral processes were peaceful, inclusive and transparent, as recognised by the HR/VP statement of 9^{t} July 2012.

In 2012, the EU played a major role in supporting UN efforts and continued to offer assistance to TL in order to address its Human Rights challenges. On 19 December, the Security Council adopted a presidential statement on Timor-Leste marking the completion of the mandate of the United Nations Integrated Mission in Timor-Leste (UNMIT) on 31 December 2012, welcoming the considerable progress made by Timor-Leste and noting the willingness of the UN and other partners to continue to support the country. Although there will not be any regular debates nor reporting on Timor-Leste, it will remain on the Security Council agenda for a probation period of 3 years, during which the Security Council could immediately discuss Timor-Leste, if needed.

On 31 December 2012, UNMIT completed its withdrawal. An innovative way of cooperating between UN Agencies and the Government of Timor-Leste, in the context of the New Deal, is currently being defined. A pending issue concerns investigations into serious crimes committed in 1999 (as part of the violence that occurred before independence). The UN will not be able to finance these investigations after the cessation of its Mission in April 2013. On several occasions, including during regular debates at the UN Security Council, the EU stressed its readiness to support Timor-Leste in consolidation of its achievements and progress towards stable democracy.

Progress in the human rights agenda, including gender equality, will be closely monitored and continue to feature high on the EU's priority list. EU assistance is also encompassing objectives such as democratic governance, the development of rural areas, and the role of civil society. This assistance remains important in order to address Timor-Leste's limited capacity to properly implement the human rights agenda**.**

The EU has been closely associated with the UN's activities, including participation in Open Days on Women, Peace and Security.

Vietnam

The EU-Vietnam Partnership and Cooperation Agreement signed in June 2012 provided an opportunity to deepen cooperation on human rights. In the framework of advance-implementation of the Agreement, the EU and Vietnam reviewed the modalities for their regular dialogue on human rights in early 2012. They moved from a local dialogue led by EU Heads of Mission in Hanoi to a capitals-based enhanced dialogue led by human rights experts. The first round of this new, enhanced human rights dialogue took place on 12 January 2012 in Hanoi and a second round took place on 25 October in Brussels.

Through this new regular human rights dialogue, and also public statements and diplomatic demarches, the EU urged the Government of Vietnam to remove restrictions on freedom of expression and the media. In a statement by the spokesperson of HR/VP Ashton, the EU expressed serious concern about the harsh sentencing of three high-profile internet bloggers in Ho Chi Minh City. The EU also raised its concern about capital punishment and monitored developments in the field of Freedom of religion or belief and legal and judicial reforms. Representatives of the EU Delegation in Hanoi visited prison facilities and attended a number of trials of human rights defenders. It also interacted with local human rights activists and civil society representatives to share views on human rights developments. The EU continued to support the modernisation of the judicial system with a contribution of 8 Million Euros to the "Justice Partnership Programme", a joint donor initiative involving the EU, Denmark and Sweden. The project supports key institutions such as the Ministry of Justice, Supreme People's Court, Supreme People's Procuracy and Bar Association and includes training of judges, lawyers and other law professionals.

The European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR) supported eleven projects in 2012, covering a broad range of issues including on the rights of the child, workers' rights, rights of persons with disabilities, fighting violence against women and human trafficking, and non-discrimination. New projects were also launched in the field of, strengthening workers' rights and representation, developing the rule of law and social partnerships in labour relations, the rights of persons belonging to ethnic minorities, empowering people with HIV and populations at higher risk of HIV infection.

In the framework of the Strategic Dialogue Project, the EU also supported activities in the areas of governance, migration, human rights and anti-corruption.

VIII Oceania

Australia

Australia remains a strong promoter of human rights. However, the questions of asylum seekers placed human rights issues on the domestic agenda in the second half of 2012. In August, the Parliament adopted the *Migration Legislation Amendment (Offshore Processing and Other Measures) Act*, implementing recommendations by an Expert Panel on Asylum Seekers which was to advise on the sensitive issue of the growing number of asylum seekers arriving by boat. The Act reinstated offshore processing of asylum-seekers in Nauru and Papua New Guinea. In addition to a heated internal political debate, the announced measures resulted in negative reactions by Amnesty International. The UN High Commissioner for Refugees raised in October questions to the Immigration Minister on transfer plans to PNG which continues to retain significant reservations to the 1951 Refugee Convention and failed signing other international treaties relevant for the protection of refugees and stateless people in PNG. In December, UNHCR issued a critical report on the Nauru Detention facility, mentioning harsh accommodation conditions, no fully functioning legal framework and inadequate capacity to assess refugee claims

Human Rights Consultations with Australia were held in the framework of EU-Australia Political Dialogue in October 2012. Exchanges on the adopted regional processing arrangements for asylum seekers also took place within the annual EU-Australia Senior Officials' Dialogue on Migration held on 8 October 2012 in Brussels. Australia underlined the sensitivity of the issue and the growing problems with economic migration flows to Australia. A comprehensive bilateral Framework Agreement, currently under negotiation, will provide for additional possibilities for further enhancing dialogue and cooperation on human rights issues with Australia.

Fiji

In 2012 Fiji remained under Article 96 of the Cotonou Partnership Agreement for breaching essential elements contained therein such as the respect for democratic values, human rights and the rule of law. However, the year saw a number of encouraging developments such as the lifting of the Public Emergency Regulations, the organisation of electronic voter registration and the launching of a constitutional review process. In recognition of these positive steps, the EU Council amended the appropriate measures in its 24 September 2012 decision allowing the programming discussions for the 11th EDF to start with the current government.

Human rights and the democratisation process were at the centre of EU action in Fiji during 2012. The European Union welcomed the lifting of the Public Emergency Regulations in early January. Alongside other donors, the EU supported the Constitution Commission that carried out extensive public consultations and prepared a new draft constitution that contains an extensive bill of rights, including socio-economic rights, and introduces quota for women in elections.

The EU also continued to provide support to civil society organisations and human right defenders through grants awarded from the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR). The country-based support scheme focused on democratisation and women's rights. The EU issued a local statement in May regretting the last-minute cancellation by the police of the march against homophobia in Suva.

A fact-finding mission of the ACP-EU Joint Parliamentary Assembly (JPA) visited Fiji in July to assess the state of the democratisation process.

The European Union issued another local statement in September when a high-level ILO fact-finding mission, invited by the government to look into allegations of non-respect of freedom of association, had to leave the country early due to disagreement with the government over its terms of reference. In November the ILO Governing Body highlighted Fiji as one of five countries with the most serious and urgent problems regarding freedom of association.

All these and other relevant issues were systematically raised in the political dialogue with the Fiji government.

Small Pacific Island States – Kiribati, Republic of Marshall Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, Nauru, Palau, Tonga, Tuvalu

The EU promotes human rights and gender equality through ad hoc political and policy dialogue with the government given the absence of EU Delegations in these countries. The EU also works with regional organisations and civil society in the region to encourage respect for, and the protection of human rights.

Gender-based violence and discrimination against women in the Pacific region is among the highest in the world. At the 2012 Pacific Islands Forum, the Pacific Leaders issued a Gender Equality Declaration, committing to take action to improve the situation. The EU welcomed the Declaration and initiatives presented. At the same event, the EU participated in a panel discussion on gender equality, expressing its readiness to support countries' efforts to address gender equality and to work together with other donors in this respect.

The EU encourages countries to ratify and implement international Human Rights Treaties and the Rome Statute and has therefore allocated €1 million specifically to the Pacific Islands Forum to support Pacific island countries in their ratification and implementation which is low by international standards. The project should also contribute to increased gender equality and lower levels of gender-based violence.

The EU issued statements in 2012 to mark generally free and fair presidential elections in Kiribati, the Marshall Islands and Palau.

New Zealand

In the field of Human rights, New Zealand is a longstanding partner of the EU in international fora and one with which the EU has a fruitful dialogue.
In the framework of EU-New Zealand political dialogue, human rights issues were discussed within broader exchanges on developments in the region, e.g. within the EU-New Zealand Security Talks held in November 2012 in Wellington. A comprehensive bilateral Framework Agreement, currently under negotiation, will provide for additional possibilities for further enhancing dialogue and stepping up cooperation on human rights issues with New Zealand.

Papua New Guinea

In 2012, the country experienced a serious political crisis due to the uncertainty deriving from the succession process of ailing PM Somare and the court decision to replace him with current PM O'Neill. The Court decision allowed a generational change of leadership and contributed to restore political stability in the country.

Advocacy in support of human rights by civil society is extremely weak, due to the fragmentation of existing organisations and to the passive acceptance by the public at large of the most serious violations. To support the development of a vocal civil society promoting and advocating protection of human rights, a support project to Non-State Actors was funded by the EU with the aim of creating a platform for a regular and stable dialogue.

To Support Women's group in becoming vocal and coherent in their claims towards the Government and society, two EIDHR projects co-founded with TIPNG and World Vision were launched to raise awareness on women's rights. At the occasion of Europe day, the EU Delegation organised a painting exhibition on the theme "Perception of Women in the Papuan Culture".
Five on-going EIDHR projects are contributing to lowering the impact of mining developments upon indigenous communities. These projects are promoting the use of mediation and restorative justice to repair community relationships and minimise law and order issues in tribal fight areas in 31 target communities.

PNG public opinion remains largely in favour of the death penalty. Nevertheless, the country moved from a negative vote to abstention on the moratorium on the use of the death penalty at the UN plenary meeting of 20 December 2012 (Resolution 67/176) following intensive lobbying efforts on the part of the EU.

Samoa

As in several Pacific countries, gender-based violence and discrimination against women remain of major concern. The government introduced a controversial bill guaranteeing 10% of the seats in Parliament to women after the next elections in 2015. Currently it is a requirement that a political candidate must be a holder of a “matai” (chiefly) title. Many villages in Samoa still currently prohibit women from holding matai titles, thus, political representation remains essentially in the hands of men. At the 2012 Pacific Islands Forum, Samoa PM, together with other Pacific Leaders, issued the Pacific Leaders Gender Equality Declaration committing to take action to improve the situation.

The European Union promotes human rights and gender through our dialogue with the country combined with financial support from different instruments (EDF, FPI, EIDHR). The EIDHR programme on Media for Democracy and Human Rights funded a chapter on press freedom in Samoa in the IFJ's report (international Federation of Journalists) "Press Freedom in the Pacific". Support was provided from the regional EIDHR project supporting Pacific island countries to assist Samoa in its ratification and implementation of international Human Rights Treaties and the Rome Statute which is low by international standards. This project delivered technical assistance to the government to work on legislative indicators in relation to the Convention of the Rights of Disabled Persons (CRDP) and facilitated a workshop on CRDP.

The EU works to strengthen the role of Civil Society including in the field of human rights and funded the rehabilitation of several Women's Fales[13] and income generating projects for women under EDF. The EU also sponsored self-defence and anger management courses.

Solomon Islands

The Solomon Islands enjoyed a period of relative peace and stability contributing to improved socioeconomic development. In February 2012 the Commissioners of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission presented to the Prime Minister the report on the period of the Tensions 1998-2003, with recommendations to address the legacy of violence from 'the Tensions' and long-term reconciliation. The report is still to be brought before the Parliament.

[13] Fales are traditional Samoa buildings where women come together in their communities to meet, talk and work together.

In 2012 the EU actively promoted human rights and gender equality in the Solomon Islands through political dialogue and financial support. Ratification of the Rome convention relating to the International Criminal Court (ICC) was raised in the formal Political Dialogue in September. There appears to be no principled objection to the ratification of the ICC, but rather the delay seems attributable to a backlog of legislation.

The Solomon Islands is a pilot country for the implementation of EU's Agenda for Action on Democracy Support, a further incentive to continue to make progress on democratic reform. In view of parliamentary elections in 2014, EU support focused on improving transparency and integrity of the electoral process; fostering women's political participation and representation; and strengthening Non-State Actors and citizens' capacity to defend their rights and play an active part in the political debate at all levels. Another key priority is to promote gender equality and combat violence against women. Together with other donors and in close coordination with the government, projects were launched to strengthen the electoral cycle, advance better implementation of CEDAW, strengthen the role of civil society in promoting gender equality and raise awareness on Violence against Women (*inter alia* through community theatre).

Vanuatu

General elections were held in Vanuatu on 30 October 2012 and members of the EU Delegation were invited as observers in some polling stations. The organization of the elections went rather well although several petitions were deposited afterwards to denounce 'ghost voters' and unethical behavior by some candidates.

In the context of budget support during 2012 and in the process of finalizing a Good Governance and Development Contract (GGDC) for Vanuatu, an assessment on the respect of EU fundamental values was made. The main conclusion was that Vanuatu qualified for GSDC but that further efforts were needed, in particular as regards violence against women and children, participation of women in political life and treatment of prisoners. The Implementation phase of the GGDC (contributing 3% of annual total budget) will put a strong emphasis on the need to demonstrate through appropriate indicators the improvements achieved in the area of human rights (notably gender related issues) to be eligible to the flexible tranche of the allocation.

Particular attention has been given to support NGOs active in the fight against corruption and combatting violence against women under the NSA/LA budget line (€250000), *inter alia to raise awareness through art and drama*; this complemented the support provided under the 10th European Development Fund to NSAs which amounted to €1.6 million for 2008-2013.

Although Vanuatu ratified the Rome Convention on the ICC in 2011, it has not been fully implemented in the legal framework of the country

IX The Americas

Canada

As collectively engaged human rights partners, the EU and Canada share common values and work closely together to promote respect for human rights, democracy and the rule of law. This common approach is reflected by regular human rights consultations and close cooperation on human rights issues within the UN (New York and Geneva) and OSCE (Vienna).

In the course of 2012, the EU and Canada continued their close cooperation in the context of the UN Human Rights Council and the UNGA third committee on countries of particular concern from a human rights perspective, not least Iran and Syria.

USA

The EU and the US held bilateral human rights consultations twice in 2012 (February in Washington, DC, and July in Brussels). The EU also engaged on human rights issues in the context of its counter-terrorism and international law dialogues with the State Department. The institutionalised dialogues were complemented by regular exchanges and cooperation on issues, such as women economic and political empowerment, women, peace and security, freedom of religion and belief, freedom of the Internet, LGBTI rights, and human rights in China, Russia, Myanmar/Burma, and the Asian and Arab Spring countries.

On the occasion of 2012 Human Rights Day, the EU organised a high-level event in cooperation with a number of EU Member States and the US on "Human Rights and the Transatlantic Partnership: Supporting Freedom of expression, Freedom of Association, and Political Participation". EU-US partnership in multilateral fora was significant to advance important human rights issues such as Internet freedom (as part of the work conducted through the "No Disconnect Strategy"), freedom of religion and belief, or specific country situations.

The death penalty in the US remains a top concern for the EU. However, there have been significant changes in the use and support for the punishment in the US in the past year. In 2012 there were again 43 executions, equal to the number in 2011. This was nearly a fifty percent drop since 2000 (78 executions). Additionally a record low number of death sentences were handed down by courts across the country, 78 in 2012, compared to the high of 1996 (315 sentences). In 2012 the EU intervened on six state level cases that met the criteria for intervention as outlined in the EU Guidelines. In 2012, the HRVP issued a statement congratulating Connecticut on abolition of the death penalty. The EU also continued to support NGOs' advocating the abolition of the death penalty.

For a third year in a row the US Congress passed legislation preventing the use of funds to construct/modify detention facilities in the US, or to transfer detainees from Guantánamo to the US or to third countries (National Defence Authorization Act 2013). The legislation on Guantánamo prevented the Administration from progressing on the file, notwithstanding President Obama's reiterations that closure was still a priority for his Administration. The EU continued to engage with the US government as regards the persisting restrictions to detainees' transfer affecting Guantánamo closure.

During 2012, the European Parliament adopted a follow-up report on alleged transportation and illegal detention of prisoners in European countries by the CIA and called the attention of the HR/VP to the death penalty in the US, the closure of Guantánamo, and the legal aspects of the use of drones' strikes for counter-terrorism purposes.

The EU cooperated with the US on women's economic and political empowerment by co-founding the Equal Future Partnership whose goal is for women to participate fully in public life and to lead and benefit from inclusive economic growth. At the initiative's launch event, the EU's commitments included: campaigns focused on the political and economic participation of women in countries in transition, addressing violence against women as a barrier to such participation; promoting representation of women in peace negotiations and mediation processes; and advancing participation and empowerment of women within the EU.

Latin America and the Caribbean

Argentina

In 2012 the promotion of human rights remained high on the agenda of the government of Argentina. Nonetheless, and though Argentina has ratified most of the UN and regional human rights instruments as well as the Rome Statue of the International Criminal Court, the outcome Universal Periodic Review conducted in 2012 highlights a number of problem areas. These include: a) overcrowding in prisons and reports of torture in prisons; b) human trafficking, domestic violence and violence against women and c) the rights of persons belonging to minorities.

A meeting of the EU-Argentina Human Rights local dialogue, provided for in the 2008 Joint declaration on Human Rights, was held in April 2012. In addition an EU-Argentina civil society seminar on social inclusiveness was held in December 2012

In EU-Argentina cooperation in Human Rights, social justice, rights of persons belonging to minorities and human rights of indigenous populations have been key issues and core areas of intervention for the “European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights” (EIDHR) and "Non States Actor” thematic lines. The EU worked with the Argentine Secretariat for Human Rights supporting the work of 8 Observatories of Human Rights. The EU also aimed to strengthen the role of civil society organisations in promoting human rights, human rights defenders, justice and the fight against impunity

Belize

Belize is a constitutional parliamentary democracy. On 7 March 2012 the UDP was re-elected to a second term of office with a greatly reduced mandate. Where the UDP previously enjoyed a super majority in parliament, it now holds a slim 17 to 14 lead in the House of Representatives.

The EU human rights priorities in Belize include the use of excessive force by security forces, lengthy pre-trial detention, domestic violence, discrimination against women, sexual abuse of children, trafficking in persons and discrimination based on sexual orientation.

There are only a few non-governmental organizations in Belize that work on different aspects of human rights which include advocacy, public education and awareness and some programme implementation.

Violence against women and children remains a serious concern, as does the prevalence of child labour in agriculture. Gender disparities are profound; Belize ranks 100 out of 135 countries on the World Economic Forum's 2011 Global Gender Gap Report. Belize is a source, transit, and destination country for women and children trafficked for prostitution and forced labour. The U.S. State Department's 2011 Trafficking in Persons Report removed Belize from the Tier 2 Watch List but continued to categorize it as a Tier 2 country.

Whilst Belize retains the death penalty for murder and military offences, it is considered to be a de facto abolitionist state, as it has not carried out an execution since 1985. On December 20, 2012, Belize again voted against the Resolution on a Moratorium on the Use of the Death Penalty at the UN General Assembly. Although Belize has been a party to the International Convention on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) since 1996, it has neither signed nor ratified the Second Optional Protocol to the ICCPR aiming at the abolition of the death penalty (1989), nor has it signed or ratified the American Convention on Human Rights and its Protocol to Abolish the Death Penalty (1990).

The next UPR for Belize will take place in July 2013.

Bolivia

Cooperation between Bolivia and the EU in the human rights field focuses on: strengthening of the rule of law and improved access to justice; strengthening of the protection and exercise of indigenous peoples' rights; and elimination of violence against women, girls and boys.

In 2012, the EU launched a programme under the Instrument for Stability (4 Mio €) addressing socio-political conflict and improving human rights, rule of law and democracy. It involved support to the consultation process with indigenous peoples; conflict management and prevention; and strengthening of the independence of the judicial system.

The EU has adopted a local strategy for the implementation of EU guidelines on violence against women and girls and an advisory group has been established. The EU also works with the UN to strengthen the legal framework on violence against woman.

Bolivia is a pilot country for the implementation of EU's Agenda for Action on Democracy Support. This has encouraged the EU and Member States to work towards greater coherence. It has also been an incentive for Bolivia to continue to make progress on democratic reform. The 2nd EU-Bolivia High Level Dialogue (2012) agreed to create an EU-Bolivia joint working group on democracy. The EU has followed the cases of some EU citizens (Toaso and Dwyer) accused of terrorism and has raised the matter at the highest level.

Brazil

In 2012, the main priority in Brazil remained the protection of vulnerable groups, such as children, women, Indigenous Peoples, Human Rights Defenders (HRDs), and LGBTI populations, namely by combating homophobic violence. In addition, the EU also focused on rule of law and the respect and full implementation of human rights-related legislation.

The year was marked by Brazil's continued fight against extreme poverty, two large national conferences took place in the areas of children and adolescents and people with disabilities, accompanied by public debates regarding indigenous issues and the establishment of large development projects, as well as the preparation for big events such as the World Cup and the Olympic Games.

In 2012 Brazil underwent its second Universal Periodic Review in Geneva, accepting 169 (10 partially) of the 170 recommendations presented by 70 countries. Most recommendations focused on issues such as access to justice, extrajudicial killings, prison conditions, violence against women, the situation of human rights defenders and indigenous peoples. In November, Brazil was re-elected as member of the UN Human Rights Council for a three year term (2013-2015).

Dialogue and close cooperation with Brazil on human rights issues continued in 2012. As foreseen in the JAP, the EU and Brazil have developed an institutional framework enabling regular consultations on human rights-related issues. In March 2012, the EU adopted a Strategic Framework on Human Rights and Democracy and an Action Plan.

During HRVP Ashton's visit to Brazil (February 2012), it was agreed that joint initiatives should be undertaken on Human Rights Defenders, Women and Security; Human Rights and Development. In addition, it was agreed to provide technical assistance and capacity-building to interested third countries through triangular cooperation to support them in the implementation of recommendations following the Universal Periodic Review.

A concrete result of this cooperation was that on 19 June 2012, the EU and Brazil jointly organised a side-event to the Human Rights Council's 20th Session on "Women human rights defenders". Moreover, the rights of indigenous peoples were discussed in the framework of the Rio + 20 Conference on Sustainable Development.

The third meeting of the EU-Brazil Human Rights Dialogue took place in September 2012 in Brussels. Discussions focused on coordination in multilateral fora, Human Rights Defenders, Children, Human Trafficking and bilateral cooperation projects. It was agreed to define concrete modalities to provide technical assistance and capacity-building to interested third countries through triangular cooperation.

In November, the II EU-BR Civil Society Seminar on Human Rights was held in Brussels. The Seminar was implemented within the EU-Brazil Sector Dialogues, aiming to engage civil society organisation, in both Europe and Brazil, on issues and themes touching upon different aspects of the human rights political dialogue. The agenda focused on three focus areas: lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTI) rights, Human Trafficking and Human Rights Defenders. The recommendations put forward within the II Seminar will be presented at the 2013 edition of the political dialogue.

The EU continued to actively support indigenous rights in Brazil, through the NGO budget line, EIDHR and the tropical forest budget line. EU Member States are also active in the promotion of indigenous rights and finance several cooperation projects. Indigenous communities have been the target of increased violence in the past year and contacts with Federal authorities responsible for Indigenous issues have therefore intensified (including with FUNAI, Brazilian agency for Indigenous Peoples). The EU Delegation and the EU Member States in Brasilia maintain regular contact with the Human Rights Secretariat and the Human Rights Defenders Programme.

The EU Sector Dialogues Facility Fund financed two major activities: Human Trafficking Seminar (May 2012) and Human Rights Defenders Seminar (December 2012), both held in Brasilia. A CBSS/EIDHR Call for Proposal was launched in November 2011 targeting violence against women, children, indigenous peoples and human rights defenders. Eleven projects were selected for funding in 2012 and 2013.

In 2012, questions submitted by the European Parliament touched on living conditions in Brazilian prisons, labour standards and extrajudicial killings but focused mainly on the situation of indigenous people's rights. To be noticed that President Barroso, in December 2012, met in Strasbourg Cacique Raoni, the chief of the Kayapo people of the Brazilian Amazon, during his campaign tour in Europe to raise awareness on the situation of his people and the need to preserve their territory.

Chile

Dialogue and close cooperation with Chile on human rights issues continued in 2012. There are three main priorities for this cooperation: indigenous rights; gender equality; and actions to promote reconcilitiation and preserve memories from the 1973-90 military dictatorship. Through the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights, the EU provided EUR 1.1 million to support eight Chilean civil society organisations working to defend human rights in these areas. Following the civil society seminar on institutional provisions for protecting and promoting human rights that was organised by the EU in October 2011, legislation was approved in 2012 to create a Human Rights Under-Secretariat in the Justice Ministry. The EU provides some funding to, and maintains close contacts with, the quasi-autonomous National Institute for Human Rights which in 2012 highlighted concerns about police violence in response to protests by students and other citizens´ groups; and about the use of anti-terrorist legislation to prosecute indigenous Mapuche activists. Prejudice and discrimination on grounds of sexual orientation remain widespread, but the homophobic murder of a young gay man, Daniel Zamudio, sparked national debate and prompted Congress to approve Chile's first Anti-Discrimination Law which outlaws discrimination on grounds of sexual orientation, among many other grounds. During the third EU-Chile local Human Rights dialogue in May, the EU welcomed this ground-breaking legislation and highlighted the need to complement it with educational and preventative policies. The EU and Chile also discussed the rights of women, people with disabilities, indigenous peoples, migrants and children; and cooperation in UN fora.

Colombia

Colombia's internal armed conflict, drug trafficking and organised crime continue to pose major challenges, but the Santos administration has prioritised human rights issues, and the year saw important positive developments including major legislative and policy measures to tackle the root causes of the conflict. Implementation of the Law on victims and land restitution started, relations between the executive and the judiciary improved, and further progress was made towards the establishment of a National Human Rights Policy. There was broad participation by government, civil society and the international community in a National Conference on Human Rights in December.

The reforms prepared the ground for, and culminated in, the launch of peace negotiations with the FARC which are reportedly taking place in a climate of mutual trust and making reasonable progress. Nonetheless, the peace process is fraught with difficulties and risks. The government continued to make considerable efforts to strengthen the rule of law, mainly by increasing the state's presence in locations previously controlled by illegal armed groups; but worrying levels of violations of human rights and international humanitarian law continued. Threats to internal security emanated from the guerrilla, but also from increasingly large-scale armed groups that emerged after the paramilitary demobilisation and have become the prime threat to the rule of law. The high number of internally displaced persons (3.8 million) constitutes a severe, ongoing humanitarian crisis. In this context, the implementation of the government's progressive legislation continues to pose significant challenges.

The EU supported the Santos reforms. In addition to its longstanding and continuing support to the justice sector, it launched a first action in support of the Law on victims and land restitution. Land reform and rural development will be a focal area of EU cooperation also in years to come. The EU also expressed its support of the peace negotiations through a series of HR/VP statements, and offered to help with the implementation of a possible peace deal. ECHO provided €12m in humanitarian assistance to Colombians displaced internally or in neighbouring countries.

In general terms, EU priorities in the field of human rights in Colombia are: human rights defenders and trade unionists; children and armed conflict; women, peace and security; impunity; and persons belonging to ethnic minorities. These are central to EU cooperation under the EIDHR, but also under bilateral cooperation, and were discussed in the bilateral Human Rights dialogue, which in 2012 became capitals-based (rather than local). Human rights and the fight against impunity is a key focus of EU cooperation, and human rights-related issues permeate all aspects of EU aid.

The human rights situation in Colombia was an important priority for the European Parliament, not least in the context of the approval of the trade agreement between the EU and Colombia/Peru. In response to an EP resolution in June, calling for a 'road map' on human and labour rights, Colombia submitted a detailed list of relevant objectives and measures that are underway or planned, which smoothed the way for EP approval of the agreement in December. The EP held several debates and hearings, and MEPs asked numerous questions about human rights in Colombia.

In the last days of 2012, the EU also expressed concern about a constitutional amendment that extends the scope of military jurisdiction, expressing expectation that this will not lead to an increase in impunity not least in relation to extrajudicial executions allegedly committed by members of the armed forces.

Costa Rica

The EU holds consultations with the Costa Rican authorities on the content and implementation of the country's human rights policies.

In October the EU launched the project "Emprende", with the objective to encourage greater economic independence of vulnerable women with a business potential in rural and marginal urban areas.

Ecuador

The Ecuadorian Constitution provides a comprehensive framework for the protection of human rights. In 2012 the government has taken further steps to advance the fight against poverty, promote social and economic rights and improve access to education and health. However, the effective protection of human rights, the consolidation of democratic institutions and the strengthening of its capacity (notably of the judiciary system and its independence) remain a challenge.

Some decisions taken by President Correa's administration concerning private media and election coverage have raised concerns as they restrict freedom of expression, freedom of press and access to information. The EU raised this issue in its contacts with the Ecuadorian authorities.

The government is also criticized by Human Rights defenders for the criminalization of social protests, affecting in particular indigenous leaders defending water, environment, and territory and claiming their right to be properly consulted. These issues were raised in the Universal Periodic Review that Ecuador underwent in 2012.

Ecuador continues to suffer the consequences of the Colombian internal conflict: violence linked to the activities of the illegal groups, drugs and human trafficking, and the presence of Colombian refugees / persons in need of international protection that constitute a humanitarian and security challenge. Refugee policy has become more restrictive in 2012.

Apart from its dialogue with the government, the EU continued to maintain close links with civil society and human rights defenders. The EU has been supporting actions aiming to protect the rights of vulnerable people (indigenous people, women, children, and people on the move), as well as actions on crisis prevention and conflict management in the Northern Border of Ecuador.

Other key areas of the EU intervention in Ecuador are the promotion of political rights, of the freedom of speech and of the press, the reform of the judiciary system, the situation of human rights defenders, gender equality and rights of persons belonging to minorities, as well as actions to improve the human rights situation in the border with Colombia.

El Salvador

Increased government spending in 2012 on social programmes was targeted towards the most vulnerable sectors of the population, producing positive results. Regarding transitional justice, president Funes recognised the crimes committed by the State in the past through public acts of forgiveness on several emblematic cases, such as the killing of Bishop Romero and the El Mozote massacre. By doing so, the government partially complied with the Inter-American Commission recommendations.

An important development has been the truce that was agreed between the two major gangs of the country, responsible for the majority of the killings in El Salvador. The government has formulated a Pact for Security and Employment, which aims to capitalise on the truce by trying to transform the neighbourhoods most affected by gang presence. The EU reacted to these developments by allocating €1 million through the Peace-Building component of the Instrument for Stability, aimed at supporting civil society organisations that work on violence prevention and creating favourable social conditions at local level. For this truce to be converted into a long-lasting improvement, it is imperative to have an integral approach, offering prevention reinsertion and job creations initiatives.

The EU intervened in 2 human rights defenders cases in 2012. The first one was the attack against an environmental rights defender, to whom legal support was provided through a specialised NGO. The second case occurred in December when a family was threatened by gang members related to the mother's involvement with the defence of women's rights. The Delegation managed to relocate them to a shelter and the Spanish Embassy helped with the procedures and follow-up of the case. Four EIDHR – projects were approved in 2012 (€1 million) in the area of strengthening citizen participation in local administration and the respect for human rights at local level.

The electoral reforms that were partly financed by the EU contributed to an increase in the number of voting centres throughout the country, reducing significantly the distance for the majority of the citizens at the 2012 legislative and local elections. This improvement made voter participation easier and also reduced drastically attempts from political parties to bus voters trying to influence their vote. Another important change was the possibility for voters to cast their ballot on a particular candidate, in other words preferential voting. Until the elections of 2012 it was only possible to vote for a political party which all presented closed lists. Furthermore, the EU sent an electoral experts mission that witnessed the electoral process and drafted a series of recommendations that have been discussed with the respective authorities.

Guatemala

The HR/VP congratulated Guatemala in April on its decision to join the International Criminal Court. For many years the EU had reiterated the importance of this step and had undertaken several demarches on the issue. Following Guatemala's adhesion, the EU approved a project under the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR) to support implementation of the Rome Statute and related changes to the national legal framework. In total 6 new projects were contracted during 2012 under the EIDHR (€776.000).

Another topic that required close attention of the EU is the discussion with the Guatemalan authorities in respect of the core ILO labour rights conventions. For many years Guatemala has been the object of discussion within the ILO concerning the freedom of association. The EU Delegation and Member States on the ground agreed upon a common approach towards the complaint lodged in June by trade union organisations before the ILO. The respect of ILO conventions is an important benchmark for EU trade relations with third countries and will continue to be so within the framework of the recently approved EU - Central America Association Agreement.

The EU Delegation and Member States also ensured close coordination on the Universal Periodic Review of the UN Human Rights Council, which the country underwent in October 2012.

The EU expressed its concern over the state of emergency in Barillas in May, as well as over the tragic events in Totonicapán in October during which 7 protesters were killed by the military. In the aftermath the President restricted the use of armed forces in manifestations and the government allowed for an independent investigation to take place, which led to the arrest of several members of the army. This incident highlights the need to strengthen the country's conflict resolution mechanisms, an issue which the EU will focus on over the coming years.

During 2012, 305 attacks to human rights defenders were registered. The EU Delegation ensured follow-up to a number of high profile cases through periodical meetings of the EU "Filter Group" and close contacts with relevant state authorities. In November the EU Delegation and the Members States' Embassies organised the Human Rights Defenders' Annual Meeting, which focused on the challenges confronted by defenders of indigenous peoples' rights and the rights to land, and by those related to access to justice.

Finally, throughout 2012 the EU continued to provide both strong political and financial support to the mandate of the International Commission against Impunity in Guatemala (CICIG).
In the area of democracy, despite initial discussion in parliament about electoral reforms no proposals have been adopted. This means that none of the recommendations made by the EU electoral experts regarding the 2011 elections have been taken into account.

Guyana

Guyana's trend on the path of democratic consolidation can be considered positive. In particular, the results of the parliamentary elections of November 2011, which determined the political environment in 2012, produced a window of opportunity for more transparency and accountability in Government business.

The EU's continuation of its country programme of support to non-state actors through the EIDHR thematic line continues to be successful, with almost 100% absorption of the funding available.

The main issues in Guyana are extra-judicial killings, police violence, domestic violence, land distribution, and LGBTI rights. Death penalty prevails in the law but is not applied.

Extensive discussions were undertaken during 2012 with UNDP to prepare an EU contribution to the UN's ongoing programme of support to democratic institutions, including the national Human Rights Commission

Honduras

Claims by national and international human rights organisations of human rights violations in Honduras (especially against journalists, LGBTI groups, women, human rights defenders and rural populations) did not decline during 2012. The human rights situation in the region of Bajo Aguan - where a historic agrarian conflict exists - remains acute, despite a Government agreement to redistribute land to some rural groups.

Justice, human rights and security remained the main topics on the agenda of the EU's political dialogue with the Honduran authorities and a target sector of development cooperation. Human rights and the protection of human rights defenders constitute a continuous effort for the EU and its Member States. During 2012 this was implemented through an open dialogue with human rights organisations, meetings with defenders at risk and visits to their premises. Furthermore, in 2012 the EU issued several public statements expressing concern about the human rights situation in the country and calling Honduran authorities to investigate acts and protect individuals. In February, an EU statement was issued after a fire in the Comayagua prison had killed 360 inmates; in May the EU Heads of Mission in Tegucigalpa held a joint press conference in reaction to an increasing wave of harassment and persecution against human rights defenders. In September 2012 an EU statement was issued to condemn the killing of a human rights defenders lawyer and a human rights prosecutor.

The European Union is aware of the importance of adopting a holistic approach to security, justice and human rights, in which the strengthening of the human rights protection system is crucial. In this sense, human rights are at the core of the bilateral cooperation projects. An EU €5 million project in support of the new Ministry of Justice and Human Rights, whose implementation started in 2012, is expected to be instrumental in the endeavour to design and implement a national human rights policy. In order to strengthen investigation capacities in cases of human rights violations the project also supports the Special Prosecutors Office. It is also foreseen to provide assistance to the National Prevention Mechanism –CONAPREV- in the framework of the Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture (OPCAT), with the objective to improve the human rights conditions of persons in detention centres.

In addition to the bilateral cooperation with the Honduran government, the EU's ongoing dialogue with civil society and funding of Honduran NGOs also constitute a cornerstone of EU's support to human rights in Honduras.

During 2012 grants for an amount of €1.5 million were awarded in the framework of the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR). The projects target actions in support of the human rights of the most vulnerable groups (children and youth, women, human rights defenders and LGBTI).

Mexico

The EU is engaged in a constructive human rights dialogue and cooperation with Mexico on both domestic and international issues. In 2012 the EU cooperation continued to support primarily the implementation of the reforms introduced in Mexico in 2011 and 2012, with a view to reinforcing the rule of law, and to protecting and promoting human rights. The EU contributions focused more specifically on strengthening the criminal justice system, fighting against gender discrimination and violence, as well as protecting human rights defenders, journalists and vulnerable groups, such as indigenous peoples and migrants.

These issues were discussed at the third session of the high-level dialogue on bilateral matters, held in Mexico in October and co-chaired, on the EU side, by the newly appointed EU Special Representative for Human Rights, Stavros Lambrinidis. For the first time in Mexico, the seminar was preceded by a civil society seminar on human rights, which allowed the civil society organisations to present recommendations to the bilateral dialogue. The results of these events will feed, among others, into the formulation of the Social Cohesion Laboratory II, whose concept was approved by the EU at the end of the year; this project includes an important component on justice and human rights.

In 2012 the EU cooperation with Mexico emphasised coherence and complementarity between projects implemented by the authorities, on one hand, and by civil society organisations, on the other hand. A call for proposals was launched and evaluated under the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR), with the objective to support NGOs in their contribution to policy formulation and implementation at national and local level. As a result, it was decided to finance 5 new projects focused on human rights defenders, migrants and women for an amount of € 1.5 million.

The EU also supported civil society initiatives in Mexico through thematic programmes of the Development Cooperation Instrument (DCI). A local call for proposals under the programme on Non-State Actors and Local Authorities in Development was launched in the second semester, with an amount of € 1.9 million, focusing on NGO contribution to the implementation of the criminal justice reform, crime prevention, public safety and law enforcement. Moreover, in the framework of the programme on Migration and Asylum, the EU decided to support the Human Rights Commission of Mexico City in its efforts to protect the human rights of transiting migrants, notably by strengthening cooperation among civil society organisations and public authorities of Mexico, Guatemala, Honduras and El Salvador.

In the framework of its local strategy to implement the EU guidelines on human rights defenders, the EU organised meetings with various civil society organisations, human rights defenders, the UN High Commissioner Office for Human Rights and relevant Mexican authorities. The problems faced by local human rights defenders were also raised to local authorities by the EU ambassadors during their visit to San Luis Potosi, and by the EU political counsellors' during their visits to Baja California and Michoacán. Moreover, in May the EU issued a local statement welcoming the adoption by the Mexican Congress of a law for the protection of human rights defenders and journalists, and offering support to its effective implementation.

The European Parliament expressed its interest in the situation of human rights in Mexico, notably in the margins of a meeting of the Euro-Latin American Parliamentary Assembly (EuroLat) in Mexico City in February; as well as during a visit of the European Parliament's Green Group to Mexico in September.

The EU organised an Election Expert Mission on the occasion of the Mexican federal electoral processes in July. The two experts' final report acknowledged the quality of the legal framework and the competence of the federal electoral authorities in Mexico. Furthermore, it submitted to the consideration of the Mexican government a series of recommendations to further improve the legal and regulatory framework of the electoral process.

Nicaragua

During 2012 the EU's human rights and democracy agenda in Nicaragua was still dominated by the post-electoral context. The fully-fledged EU Election Observation Mission deployed to the November 2011 general elections issued its final report early 2012. It confirmed the preliminary conclusions that the electoral process did not achieve essential benchmarks for democratic elections, in particular regarding the management of the process by the Supreme Electoral Council. The recommendations issued by the electoral observation mission have been one of the main issues of discussion between the EU and the authorities of Nicaragua during 2012.

The EU continued in 2012 to provide support to the Nicaraguan civil society through grants (€1.54 million) awarded in the framework of the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR). In 2012 the EIDHR support targeted actions aimed at strengthening the democratic participation in public decision-making processes, focusing notably on people with disabilities and women, in particular indigenous and afro-descendent. It also supported actions aimed at enhancing protection of the human rights of the most vulnerable groups (children in conflict with the law, women, afro-indigenous communities and LGBTI).

Panama

The EU's main human rights priority in Panama focuses on indigenous peoples. The mechanisms in place to consult the indigenous communities on the basis of democratically adopted rules on legal representation and procedures have to be further strengthened. The objective is to ensure that the culture and traditions of the indigenous peoples are taken into account, thus leading to less conflicts and improved representation of the interests of indigenous communities.
Regarding prison conditions, an effective implementation of the Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture and other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (OPCAT), leading to systematic detention monitoring and improved detention conditions is necessary.

During 2012 the EU supported the objective of civil society organisations to make human rights defenders more visible, in order to promote awareness of democratic values, and to encourage citizen participation and respect for human rights in Panama.

Paraguay

Political events entailed that 2012 was a topical year for human rights in Paraguay.

Deadly clashes on June 15th between the police and landless peasants during a land eviction caused the death of 18 people. This tragic event triggered, on June 22nd, the impeachment of President Lugo by the Paraguayan Congress. President Lugo was ousted and Vice-President Franco was inaugurated.

Reactions in Latin American regional organizations were ambiguous. MERCOSUR and UNASUR accused Paraguay of rupturing the democratic order and immediately suspended Paraguay membership. In OAS and Celac, however, the majority of the members voted against suspension. Most South American countries recalled their Ambassador and only a handful have gone back since. HRVP Ashton reacted by stating that she had taken note of the regional reaction and called for respect of the democratic will of the Paraguayan people. The European Parliament deployed a fact-finding mission from July 16th to 18th, 2012, and suggested the deployment of an EU Electoral Observation Mission.

Since then, the government internal efforts were geared to organising the General Elections which, in accordance to Constitutional provisions, will take place on April 21st, 2013. Its external relations were focused on defending the legality of the process leading to Lugo's impeachment and reassuring the international community that no rupture of the democratic order ever took place. The regional situation remains tense and unstable and its normalisation is of paramount importance, since it could impact on internal stability.

All along 2012, the EU continued monitoring the Human Rights situation and responded favourably to the invitation by the Paraguayan Government to observe the elections. A mission is scheduled to be deployed at the beginning of March 2013.

UE supports for Civil Society Organisations through the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights continued unabated throughout the year. Currently 3 projects for a total amount of 572 000 Euros are being implemented, for the promotion and protection of human rights of the elders, the promotion of equal rights for persons with disabilities and supporting civil action against hunger.

During the process leading to the 2012 and 2013 Annual Action Plan the Delegation in Asuncion held a consultation with the most prominent human rights organisations. The reinforcement of civil society organisations aiming to promote human rights and democracy was identified as the main priority.

Peru

President Humala has placed social inclusion and human rights high on the agenda and positive developments were observed in 2012. The government developed social programmes and adopted the Law on prior consultation of indigenous people and its regulation, which should contribute to the reduction of social conflicts over extractive projects. The legal and institutional framework for the promotion and respect of human rights was strengthened (through the creation of the Vice-Ministry of human rights within the Ministry of Justice and the adoption of the National Plan for Human Rights).

In response to the resolution of the European Parliament on the EU Trade Agreement with Peru/Colombia, Peru submitted a comprehensive document specifying measures under way or planned in the areas of human, labour and environmental rights. The EP held several debates and hearings, and MEPs asked questions notably about human and environmental rights and social conflicts over extractive projects in Peru.

In 2012 Peru underwent its second Universal Periodic Review. Most recommendations focused on issues such as the fight against poverty and inequalities, the protection of the rights of vulnerable groups (especially of indigenous people, women and children), prison conditions, death penalty, the protection of human rights defenders, human rights abuses by armed forces and national police during conflicts and the implementation of the Recommendations of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, in order to enhance accountability for human rights violations and compensate the victims.

The EU supported the promotion of human rights, good governance and the fight against poverty and child malnutrition through cooperation and bilateral dialogue. The issue of social conflicts and mining was discussed at the high level policy dialogue held in November. Apart from its dialogue with the government, the EU continued to maintain close links with civil society and human rights defenders. The EU intervention in Peru focused notably on: the rights of women, children and indigenous peoples', reconciliation and justice, economic and social rights, civil society and human rights defenders. Supporting the implementation of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, the EU co-financed the "Place of Memory" project (€2 mln) aiming to provide space for dialogue and to promote reconciliation following the political violence of the 1980's and 1990's.

Suriname

On the 4th of April 2012, the Surinamese National Assembly approved, with the votes of the Governmental ruling coalition representatives, an Amendment to the 1992 Amnesty Law in order to "protect those who have committed offenses and/or are suspected in the context of defence of the State and/or overthrow the lawful authority as the events in December 1982 and the Homeland War" – the so called "December Murders" where 15 prominent opponents of the military regime were tortured and executed.

This legislative act from the National Assembly had as objective, the immediate suspension of the on-going "December 1982 Murders" Court case, involving 24 suspects (including current President Desi D. Bouterse and Ambassador to the French Republic Harvey Narendorp). The suspension effectively materialised only a few weeks from its final verdict and the Court has since then declared its inability to determine whether the Amnesty Law breaches the Surinamese Constitution since only a still to be created Constitutional Court would have such legitimacy.

Following the amendment the HRVP made a statement emphasising the importance that all Surinamese, public authorities and citizens, regardless of political affiliation, join together and work to consolidate the ongoing healing and reconciliation process in the country.

Uruguay

Uruguay completed its successful 18-month Presidency of the UN Human Rights Council on December 2012. During its tenure, the Uruguay showed its firm commitment to the protection of human rights both at home and internationally.

In the UN, the EU and Uruguay continued their cooperation on promoting children's rights and fighting the death penalty, abolished in Uruguay in 1907.

EU action in Uruguay focused on support to the reform of the penal justice and penitentiary systems. As highlighted in a 2009 report by the UN Special Rapporteur for Torture, Manfred Nowak, detention centres are severely overcrowded and prisoners often held in harsh or even inhuman conditions. The EU is contributing to the implementation of the Nowak report's recommendations through a sizeable cooperation project launched in October 2011 which started its activities during 2012. Both the former and current UNSR for Torture visited Uruguay in 2012 to review the situation with support by the EU and the UN.

Other key areas of EU intervention are women's and children's rights as well as citizen security. In 2012, the EU Delegation launched a call for proposals open to civil society organisations in the area of human rights and citizen security which is a major concern in Uruguayan society due to a rise in violent crime. Four grants were awarded for projects covering prevention sexual violence, school violence, work with prisoners' families and their children and disarming of civilians. Other projects on women's and children's rights were active, e.g. to fight child trafficking and domestic violence against women. As result of one of this project, the Uruguayan government established a new national service which offers support for victims of human trafficking.

Venezuela

The outcome of the 2011 Universal Periodic Review on Venezuela adopted in March 2012 highlights that whilst progress has been made as regards economic and social rights; severe problems persist in civil and political rights. These include: severe overcrowding in prisons, excessive use of force by the police including extra-judicial killings, inefficiency and partiality of the judiciary, infringements on the freedom of expression, forced disappearances as well as insufficient protection and harassment of human rights defenders.

On 24 May 2012, the European Parliament adopted a resolution expressing its concern for Venezuela’s possible withdrawal from the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights. Indeed, in September 2012, the Venezuelan government formally denounced the American Convention on Human Rights. The decision will take effect after a transition period of one year. As a consequence, the country will no longer be subjected to the judgements by the Inter-American Court on Human Rights which over the years has ruled against Venezuela in a series of cases. The Inter-American Commission on Human Rights will remain competent on the country.

In November 2012 Venezuela was elected to serve a three-year term on the UN Human Rights Council. Though the EU does not coordinate on elections to the Human Rights Council, which is the Member States' competence, the EU attaches great importance to the principles set out in the founding resolution of the Human Rights Council regarding quality membership which stipulate "that members elected to the Council shall uphold the highest standards in the promotion and protection of human rights, shall fully cooperate with the Council".

The EU does not have a structured political dialogue with the Venezuelan Government. Discussions on human rights have thus been limited to ad hoc opportunities presented to the EU Delegation or the EU Member States' Embassies.

Local calls for proposals for funding through the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR) provide an important point of reference for civil society, in particular human rights defenders. EU co-financed projects in Venezuela aim, among others, to foster human rights monitoring and reporting, promote freedom of press and transparency, prevent violence, support restorative justice, and protect indigenous peoples' rights. The annual meeting with human rights defenders was organized by the EU Delegation in March 2012 and a regular Working Group on Human Rights with EU Member States present in Caracas was established in June 2012.

In her statement following the 8 October 2012 Presidential elections in Venezuela, High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and Vice-President of the European Commission Catherine Ashton noted that President Chavez should reach out to all segments of Venezuelan society to strengthen the country's institutions as well as promote fundamental freedoms, inclusion and sustainable economic development.

X The Caribbean

Antigua and Barbuda

EU action regarding human rights has been closely associated with stakeholders' priorities in the country. Main human rights support has been provided through the technical cooperation provided to the National Authorising Officer. The Non State Actors Advisory (NSA) Panel as part of the non-focal sector for the 10th European Development Fund (EDF) has been benefitted from €400 000 to strengthen the institutional capacity and market the presence of the NGO sector in the country.

The country has a de facto moratorium on the death penalty, with the most recent execution occurring in February, 1991. The EU through its delegation in Barbados has demarched local authorities on repealing the death sentence, along with enhancing reporting mechanisms of International Human Rights Conventions.

There are few flagrant occurrences of violence against minority groups. However domestic violence and child abuse have become pressing issues affecting the country's social development. Reports from the Ministry of National Security have placed the amount of indecent assault against minors' cases at 60 for the period January to June 2012.

Minority groups are represented in civil society organisations across the country representing youth, women and other vulnerable groups. Citizens espouse the freedom of association as over 75% of the labour force is unionised. The groups now meet quarterly as part of the NSA Panel, the first panel in the Eastern Caribbean.

Bahamas

A new Administration took office in May 2012 following the general elections which resulted in a victory for the Progressive Liberal Party over the incumbent, the Free National Movement. The human rights issues included in the Administration's agenda were presented during the opening of Parliament on May 23, 2012. The Government will move swiftly to end all forms of discrimination, especially against persons with disabilities. In keeping with this commitment the necessary legislation will be enacted. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities will also be signed and ratified. The Government will bring about the full implementation of the Child Protection Act 200714. The re-introduction of the Swift Justice Initiative to ensure the timely prosecution of cases and reduce the number of persons released on bail for serious crimes. The Witness Protection Programme will be re-introduced as a matter of priority. The Rehabilitation of Offenders Act will be amended to assist young and first-time offenders in embracing a life founded on the values of honesty, hard work and respect for the life and property of others

The main EU human rights priorities for the Bahamas are the death penalty, conditions of detention, rights of women and discrimination against Haitians. The EU Delegation in Jamaica, accredited also to the Bahamas, continually tries to engage the authorities on these priorities as well as on broader human rights issues.

[14] http://www.oas.org/dil/The_Child_Protection_Act_Bahamas.pdf

Barbados

Despite being a signatory to the Inter-American Court of Human Rights, Barbados has kept the death penalty as a part of its penal code. The last sentence to be carried out was in October, 1984 where three men were hanged.

As part of the EU's mandate, Barbadian officials have been demarched on the death penalty. Dialogue continues as the government has committed to amending the Offence against the Persons Act by removing the mandatory death sentence for murders committed.

The EU has carried out demarches on country specific human rights resolutions in the United Nations, which Barbados has for the first time in 2012 supported at the most recent United Nations General Assembly (UNGA67).

At lesser visibility, the underreported issue of domestic violence is recurring, affecting mostly women and some youth.

The EU's response to this has been provided through support to non-state actors such as the National Organisation of Women and the Men's Educational Support Association as part of the Non-State Actors plan of action.

The government has developed policies to protect the rights of children, disabled persons, immigrants, persons suffering from HIV/AIDS. Notably in March, 2012 the visually impaired Ms. Kerry Ann Ifill was named the President of the Senate. Ms. Ifill became the first woman and person with a disability to hold such a senior position.

The EU has provided in excess of €100 000 in funds via its Small Grants Scheme to NGO's. Through the University of the West Indies a programme on NGO management was established to strengthen the technical skills of local advocates.

Like others in the region Barbados has legislation which undermines the rights of the LGBTI group. As stated in the Sexual Offences act, same sex conduct is illegal and punishable by life in prison.

The EU in close cooperation with the UK High Commission has engaged local media on reducing prejudice undermining these individuals' human rights.

Cuba

The year was marked by a tragic car accident in July, in which prominent opposition leader Oswaldo Payá died together with another human right activist. The High Representative's spokesperson acknowledged this loss in a statement, recalling that Payá had been awarded the Sakharov prize in 2002 for his work in the Varela project.

On the positive side, in October, the Cuban government made a landmark decision towards freedom of movement by easing travel and migration regulations. The HRVP welcomed this announcement, wishing for a broad implementation of the new law, which entered into effect on 14 January 2013. The moratorium on implementation of the death penalty continued to be applied in 2012, no new death sentences were pronounced and Cuba continued to abstain in UN voting.

While the process of release of long term political prisoners in 2010-11 had pointed to meaningful progress of the human rights situation in Cuba, numbers of temporary arrests and short detentions remained high during 2012, with a peak in March around the Pope's visit and in early November. Harassment of Human Right Defenders (HRDs) and other peaceful members of the opposition continued. Freedom of association and assembly remained curtailed although some HR associations continued to operate, tolerated if not altogether allowed to be legally established. Freedom of expression improved slightly, with more space for the parochial publication "Espacio Laical" and the journal "Temas" and the government becoming more proactive on informing citizens (e.g. about the impact of hurricane Sandy) and raising on public TV channels the role of HRDs even if in derogatory terms.

Freedom of religion and belief has improved somewhat in 2012: religious processions have been allowed, some buildings have been returned to the Catholic Church and one more Catholic Holiday has been reinstated. Rights for the LGBTI-society have also progressed with a major public march allowed and public debates about a forthcoming proposal to legalize gay-marriage

The EU's objectives for Cuba on human rights focused on the ratification of UN pacts on human rights, freedom of expression and association and freedom of movement. The EU conveyed to the Cuban authorities its concerns about short term arrests and lack of public freedoms on various occasions, in Brussels and Havana.

The European Parliament kept up its interest for Cuba through 27 parliamentary questions, addressed mainly to the HRVP, concerning particularly short term harassment and detentions of individual HRDs, activists and independent journalists and the abolition of the exit permit. Other questions concerned the US embargo and EU humanitarian aid to Cuba in the aftermath of Hurricane Sandy.

Dominica

The EU continues to be the largest international donor to the Commonwealth of Dominica. Support has varied over numerous initiatives in the 10th European Development Fund EDF with economic and social sectors highlighted. Specific contributions to human rights and democratization for 2012 were through the Office of the National Authorising Officer in Technical Cooperation Facility to non-state actors. This assistance served to bolster the ability of NGO's to increase awareness of specific causes. Public awareness raising on specific issues in HIV/AIDS positive citizens, women's rights, LGBTI and other vulnerable groups was treated as an expected outcome of the NGO support. The EU has specifically recommended the introduction of representatives from the Kalinago people as an indigenous group to protect the interest of this most vulnerable group not only locally but also regionally. Dominica is the only Eastern Caribbean island with indigenous population nowadays.

Dominican Republic

The Dominican Republic is functioning democracy with a strong presidency and a recent history of elections declared free and fair. The EU has been supporting reform of public administration and has contributed, in 2012, to a well-functioning civil society electoral observation.

Human Rights are formally respected, all relevant conventions having been signed and ratified except the one on Migrant Workers and their families. In 2012 the DR ratified the Protocol to the American Convention on Human Rights to abolish the Death Penalty and the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment reconfirming its stance on capital punishment. However, extrajudicial killings by the police (290 in 2012) continue to alarm and were highlighted by Amnesty International in 2012. The EU has a regular political dialogue with the Dominican Republic addressing amongst others the issues of human rights.

Women's rights are enshrined in the Constitution however are compromised with increase of gender violence. An Ombudsman has been created by law in 2002, but there is still no appointment.

Dominican Civil Society grew in ambition and impact in 2012, mobilising amongst others on gender and violence issue. The EU supports most of the key organisations and initiatives working for women's rights, women's participation and against gender based violence, and accompanied their activities with political dialogue and lobbying with government, parliament and political parties.

A difficult issue concerns the several hundreds of thousands Haitian migrants and their descendants born in the country, mostly undocumented and unregulated. The EU has been supporting under the Instrument for Stability the work relating to the situation of Haitian migrants and the nationality rights of Dominicans of Haitian origin. The EU also supported key organisation concerning the rights of differently-abled people, facilitating a breakthrough in legislation concerning them.

Grenada

EU support to Grenada has progressed through assistance in reconstruction after hurricane Ivan. Devastation was tremendous and joint efforts have yielded positive results. Direct human rights support has focussed on maintaining the de facto moratorium on the death penalty and dialogue on other issues including, women's rights, and discrimination against LGBTI and HIV/AIDS positive individuals.

The National Authorising Officer office has distributed EU funds to non-state actors to develop national dialogue on key issues of: LGBTI rights, empowerment of women and children's rights. The government has remained committed to using budget support funds to develop human capital and elevate the quality of life. Health and education have become focal points for government expenditure as the country adopts a new poverty reduction programme.

The EU Delegation conducted thematic demarches on Ratification of Optional Protocols 11b and 11c to the Convention on the Rights of the Child and ILO convention 182 on the worst forms of child labour to which local authorities responded in favour.

Haiti

The situation in Haiti during 2012 has been characterized by political instability and a lack of an effective government for several months. Governance remains weak and is still negatively affected by the consequences of the January 2010earthquake.

Implementation of constitutional amendments in 2012 allowed the appointment and installation of the members of the Superior Council of the Judiciary and, for the first time in Haiti's recent history, the establishment of a Permanent Electoral Council (PEC). A Minister in charge of human rights and the fight against extreme poverty was appointed. Social programs were launched in order to improve living conditions and access to basic education for the most disadvantaged social groups.

The number of people displaced by the earthquake and living in shelters has decreased from 1.5 million to 350,000. The justice system is still facing considerable challenges, and there are accumulated delays in reforming the Haitian National Police, including law enforcement and investigation capabilities. Detention conditions remained bad due to overcrowding, largely related to arbitrary arrests and numerous cases of prolonged pre-trial detention.

In January 2012, a first instance court declared that the alleged human rights violations committed by former dictator Jean-Claude Duvalier during his presidential tenure were prescribed and that he could only be prosecuted for corruption and embezzlement of public funds. No decision was taken in 2012 on the appeal filed by several families of the victims against this ruling.

Haiti agreed in March 2012 to 122 of the 136 recommendations of the Universal Periodic Review (UPR). 14 UPR recommendations not accepted by Haiti include those concerning child domestic works and the refusal of Haiti to adopt a Code of Child Labour. The government has drafted for the first time a national report on the Convention on Civil and Political Rights. The Haitian Parliament ratified the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and the Hague Convention of 29 May 1993 on Protection of Children and Cooperation in Respect of Inter-country Adoption. In November 2012 the Independent Expert on HR in Haiti appointed by the UNSG carried out its 11th mission in the country.

Through political dialogue and cooperation, the EU in 2012 supported several projects under EDF, EIDHR and IfS, in the areas of violence against women and children including domestic violence, the rights of Haitian migrants in the Dominican Republic, and for strengthening civil society organizations. € 6 million were allocated to support the organization of the next electoral round to replace one third of the Senate and all local administrations, as well as for supporting capacity building of the PEC. However, tensions between the legislative and executive powers did not allow reaching an agreement on the composition of the PEC, causing further delays in holding the long-due electoral round.

Cooperation with the EU has also continued in support of the government's efforts to improve compliance with social and economic rights, including housing, health and education.

Priorities on human rights in the cooperation between the EU and Haiti are: rights of women, particularly in relation to violence against women; rights of children, including children held in conditions of servitude; administration of justice and detention conditions; and strengthening of civil society organizations working for human rights.

Jamaica

Jamaica has ratified most international humanitarian and human rights law instruments. Jamaica is a State Party to most of the core international human rights instruments. The main human rights EU priorities for Jamaica include imposition of the death penalty alleged misconduct by the security forces, treatment of LGBTI persons, detention conditions, and Women and Children's rights.

Jamaica retains the death penalty for murder although in recent times but there is a de facto moratorium on the use of the death penalty since 1988. On December 20, 2012, Jamaica again voted against the Resolution on a Moratorium on the Use of the Death Penalty at the UN General Assembly. There are continued reports of excessive use of force by the security forces and alleged extrajudicial executions. In 2012, there were 219 police killings, a 4% increase over 2011.

Jamaican non-governmental organizations have pressed the Government for years to repeal the anti-buggery law and to pass anti-discrimination legislation to protect LGBTI persons. According to the Jamaican "Offences Against the Person Act", a maximum sentence of 10 years can be issued for committing the crime of buggery.

In 2012, the Delegation significantly increased its promotion of human rights through a number of different activities focused especially on three main areas i.e. LGBTI issues, Children in Detention and Gender. During 2012, several projects funded under the European Initiative for Human Rights and Democracy (EIDHR) Programme undertook activities related to conditions in places of detention, police misconduct as well as children and women's rights. Under the EU financed programme of Security Sector Reform the human rights training continued to be delivered in 2012 at the Police Training School.

St Kitts and Nevis

EU support to St. Kitts and Nevis has been focused on the government's choice of Internal Safety and Security as the central issue under the 10th European Development Fund. The crime situation in recent years has seen an upward trend, threatening the social fabric of the society. This occurs despite a death penalty still embedded in the penal system and a sentence carried out in 2008; the most recent execution in the Caribbean. Authorities have been demarched on the moratorium on the death penalty and discussions continue with local authorities and NGO's through the Technical Cooperation Facility.

In the year of the London Olympics, as part of the Olympic Truce initiative, St. Kitts and Nevis was the target of a community development event to stymie the influence of gang violence.

As part of the National Poverty Reduction Strategy social protection and human resources development have been targeted as priority areas. In order to reduce the effects of crime on the society community empowerment and security management are the focal points.

St Lucia

Saint Lucia, like many other islands in the region, has had to contend with the increasing prevalence of domestic violence, child sexual abuse, police brutality and discrimination of some minority groups, notably the LGBTI community.

The country maintains a de facto moratorium on the death penalty monitored by the EU.

EU action has been provided in response to the priorities of local stakeholders, notwithstanding the salience of these issues. As part of millennium development goals (MDG), universal health care has been a priority for officials. The St. Lucian health service has been the target of the bulk of European Union's assistance. Over €23 million have gone towards the construction of the National Hospital to cater to a wide cross section of the population. This assistance to reform the vulnerable health sector will create greater access for locals to affordable healthcare and lead to an improved quality of life.

Further funds have been granted as part of the MDG initiative of €810 000 to assist the country in its social development.

St Vincent and the Grenadines

Saint Vincent and the Grenadines is a signatory to many International Human Rights conventions. However resource constraints have led the island to fall behind in reporting and implementing certain requirements. The country has maintained a de facto moratorium on the death penalty; however there are still prisoners on death row in the island's correctional facility. There has not been an execution since 1998.

There is a considerable lack of public awareness on human rights issues, despite the activities of non state actors in the human rights field. The EU has provided support to facilitate NGO activities through the Technical Cooperation facility of €780 000. Non state actors have been able to bridge the gap and engage government on policies and measures affecting not only human rights but also economic empowerment.

There is widespread discrimination of the LGBTI community. The St. Vincent and the Grenadines Human Rights Association has championed the cause of many minority groups challenging government and public officials to implement reform, notably acting as pressure group for alleged victims of police brutality. This association acts as part of the NSA panel in the absence of an established and recognized human rights institution in the country.

Trinidad and Tobago

The abolition of Death Penalty continues to be amongst the challenging human rights issues in the Country, followed by violence against women and children and LGBTIs rights. On 21 September 2012, the EU Delegation participated in the fourth Regional Forum on the Strengthening of the Inter American Commission of Human Rights. The Forum stressed the need to address and to improve Human Rights awareness at grass root level and to strengthen Human Rights Defenders. To this end, the EU Delegation supported Human Rights Defenders, by providing financial assistance (€40.000) through the 10th EDF Technical Cooperation Facility Programme, to improve awareness and capacity building on Human Rights issues such as youth rights, domestic violence, human trafficking and the right to a decent standard of living.

The EU development assistance programmes address human rights issues also by providing support of €2.1 million in the implementation of the Extractive Industry Transparency Initiative (EITI) and €1.2 million in technical assistance for the establishment and monitoring and evaluation units in line ministries. The EU also provided technical assistance of €140.000 to support the democratic structures, through strengthening the independence, accountability and transparency of the Parliament.

On 11 December 2012, the EU in collaboration with all EU missions present in T&T, met with Human Rights Defenders in a dialogue meeting. In the context of World Day against Death Penalty the EU collaborated with EU Member States in promoting a number of awareness activities such as the airing of the EU video "Death has no Appeal" and participated in conferences, organized by EU Member States, in commemorating Human Rights Day.

ANNEX I – TABLE OF ABBREVIATIONS

ACC	Audiovisual Coordination Council
ACP	African, Caribbean and Pacific Group of States
AHB	Anti-Homosexuality Bill
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
ASEM	Asia Europe Meeting
ATIDE	Association Tunisienne pour l'Intégrité et la Démocratie des Elections
AU	African Union
BICI	Bahrain Independent Commission of Inquiry
CAT	Convention against Torture
CBSS	Country Based Support Scheme
CD	Community of Democracies
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women
CENI	Independent National Election Commission
CFSP	Common foreign and security policy
CIA	Central Intelligence Agency
CICIG	International Commission against Impunity in Guatemala
CNDH	National Human Rights Commission
CNES	Conseil National Economique et Social
CoE	Council of Europe
CONAC	National Anti-Corruption Commission
CoNI	Commission of National Inquiry
CRC	Convention on the Rights of the Child
CRC	Convention on the Rights of the Child
CRDP	Convention of the Rights of Disabled Persons
CRPD	Convention of the rights of persons with disabilities
CSDP	Common Security and Defence Policy
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
CV	Cape Verde
CVJR	Commission Vérité Justice et Réconciliation
DCFTA	Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area
DCI	Development Cooperation Instrument
DE	Germany
DEVCO	EU Commission Directorate General for Development and Cooperation
DIDH	Délégation interministérielle aux droits de l'homme
DK	Denmark
DP	Democratic Party
DPRK	Democratic People's Republic of Korea

DRC	Democratic Republic of Congo
EaPIC	Eastern Partnership Integration and Cooperation programme
EAT	Election Assessment Team
EBRD	European Bank for Reconstruction and Development
EDF	European Development Fund
EEA	European Economic Area
EEM	Election Expert Mission
EFTA	European Free Trade Association
EIB	European Investment Bank
EIDHR	European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights
EITI	Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative
ENP	European Neighbourhood Policy
ENPI	European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument
EOM	Election Observation Mission
EP	European Parliament
EU	European Union
EUJUST LEX	EU Rule of Law Mission for Iraq
EUPOL AFGHANISTAN	European Union Police Mission in Afghanistan
EUPOL COPPS	EU Coordination Office for Palestinian Police Support
EVAW	Elimination of Violence Against Women Law
FGM	Female Genital Mutilation
FM	Foreign minister
FoRB	Freedom of Religion or Belief
FPI	Foreign Policy Instruments
GBAO	Gorno-Badakshan Province
GBV	Gender-based violence
GCC	Gulf Cooperation Council
GCS	Gender Co-ordination mechanism
GGDC	Good Governance and Development Contract
GoI	Government of India
GPA	Global Political Agreement
GSP	Generalized System of Preferences
HIV	Human immunodeficiency virus
HoM	Head of mission
HR/VP	High representative / Vice-president
HRC	Human Rights Council
HRD	Human rights defenders
HRDO	Human Rights Defender's Office
ICC	International Criminal Court
ICCPR	International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights
ICESCR	International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights
ICHR	Independent Commission for Human Rights

ICJ	International Court of Justice
IDP	Internally Displaced People
IEC	Independent electoral commission
IfS	Instrument for Stability
IHCHR	Independent High Commission for Human Rights
IHL	International humanitarian law
IHRL	International human rights law
ILO	International Labour Organisation
IOM	International Organization for Migration
IPA	Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance
JLS	Justice, Freedom and Security
JPA	Joint Parliamentary Assembly
JWF	Joint Way Forward
LAS	League of Arab States
LGBTI	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Intersex
MDG	Millennium development goals
MEC	Malawi Electoral Commission
MEP	Member of Parliament
MEPP	Middle East Peace Process
MERCOSUR	Mercado Común del Sur
MINURSO	United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara
NAPWA	National Action Plan for Women
NGO	Non-governmental organizations
NHRAP	National Human Rights Action Plan
NHRC	National Human Rights Commission
NSA	Non State Actors Advisory panel
NSA-LA	Non State Actors and Local Authorities
ODIHR	Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights
OMCV	Associação Organização das Mulheres de Cabo Verde
OPCAT	Optional Protocol to the convention against Torture
OSCE	Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe
PA	Palestinian Authority
PAJED	Projet d'Appui à la Justice et à l'Etat de Droit
PALOP	Portuguese-speaking African countries

PAREDA	Projet d'Actions pour le Renforcement de l'Etat de Droit et des Associations
PASTAGEP	Programme d'appui au développement du système statistique national pour la promotion de la gouvernance et le suivi/évaluation de la pauvreté
PCA	Partnership and Cooperation Agreement
PDO	Public Defender's Office
PEC	Permanent Electoral Council
PIDCP	Pacte International relatif aux Droits Civils et Politiques
PM	Prime Minister
PNG	Papua New Guinea
PSC	Political and Security Committee
RENAPDDHO	National network for the protection of human rights defenders
RTL	Re-education Through Labour
SGBV	Sexual and gender-based violence
SPRING	Support for Partnership, Reform and Inclusive Growth
SR	Special Rapporteur
SSMB	Same Sex Marriage Bill
TAIEX	Technical Assistance and Information Exchange instrument
TMAF	Tokyo Mutual Accountability Framework
TRC	Truth and Reconciliation Commission
UAE	United Arab Emirates
UDP	United Democratic Party
UK	United Kingdom
UN	United Nations
UNAMA	United Nations Assistance Mission to Afghanistan
UNASUR	Union of South American Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNGA	United Nations General Assembly
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNMIT	United Nations Integrated Mission in Timor-Leste
UNODC	United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime
UNSC	United Nations Security Council
UNSCR	United Nations Security Council Resolution
UNSG	Secretary-General of the United Nations
UPR	Universal Periodic Review
WIMSA	Working Group on Indigenous Minorities of Southern Africa
ZGF	Zambian Governance Foundation