

OPEN LETTER TO THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION, THE EUROPEAN COUNCIL AND
THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

Re: EU HUMAN RIGHTS AND DEMOCRACY SUPPORT DURING THE FINANCIAL
PERSPECTIVE 2007–2013

Brussels, 13 December 2004

As representatives of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) operating in the field of human rights and democratisation which cooperate as members of the Human Rights and Democracy Network (HRDN), we are writing to express our concern about the future of the European Union's (EU) support for human rights and democracy activities during the next Financial Perspective 2007–2013.

In the proposals published by the European Commission on 29 September 2004 to reorganise the external assistance instruments in the next Financial Perspective, the promotion of human rights and democracy is spread over four new instruments: the Development Cooperation and Economic Cooperation Instrument (DCECI), the European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument (ENPI), the Stability Instrument (SI), and the Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance (IPA). However, all four proposed instruments lack a common statement of commitment to the promotion of human rights and democracy.

We therefore call for the inclusion of an explicit, consistent and concrete commitment to support the promotion of human rights and democracy as a fundamental and priority goal in each of the four relevant external relations instruments. We also urge you to develop a dedicated horizontal program that would allow for the essential elements of the current European Initiative for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR) to be preserved and improved upon, while at the same time giving the EU human rights and democracy commitment extra focus and visibility.

As a community of values, the EU is firmly based on the principles of democracy, human rights and the rule of law. These principles, enshrined in the recently signed Constitutional Treaty, should guide and govern all EU policies and actions and hence must be consistently addressed in each of the four new external instruments. They are inextricably linked to the achievement of sustainable development and as such vital to reducing poverty and achieving social justice. The EU has made a significant investment of resources in the explicit promotion of human rights and democracy and must continue to do so, both to secure the advances that have been made to date and to move further forward.

Yet it appears that the continuation of EIDHR after 2006 is not foreseen in the proposed external financial instruments. This raises the very real danger of a fragmented and inconsistent approach to the EU's promotion of human rights and democracy in third countries which would undermine both the effectiveness and visibility of these efforts. A single, horizontal program that cuts across each of the four new external instruments will guarantee a consistency of approach and procedures, and thereby increase the impact of the resources committed. Such a program would also ensure that the profile of the EU's human rights and democracy promotion actions maintains its current level of visibility with the potential to, if more effectively implemented, raise it further.

The European Commission itself has outlined compelling arguments for such a horizontal program when it described the added value of EIDHR in its 2001 Communication on the EU's role in the promotion of democracy and human rights in third countries:

- it can be used without host government consent, something that is of particular importance as local civil society has a crucial role to play in the process of promoting human rights and democracy and must be given the necessary support to do so without government interference;
- it is complementary to other EU programs;
- it is identified with the EU's core values;
- it is seen as having the EU's political backing which can help to protect vulnerable civil society groups vis-à-vis repressive governments;
- it can take more political risks than support from member states with commercial or political interests; and
- it is seen as impartial, particularly in relation to other national donors.

We encourage you to take these comments into account when considering the Financial Perspective 2007–2013 and the new external instrument regulations. We are at your disposal for any questions you may have as a result of the points we raise.

Sincerely yours,

- Andre Wilkens, Director, Open Society Institute-Brussels (OSI-Brussels)
- Antoine Madelin, Permanent Representative to the EU, International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH)
- Dick Oosting, Director, Amnesty International EU Office
- Irune Aguirrezabal, Europe Coordinator, Coalition for the International Criminal Court (CICC) on behalf of WFM
- Laetitia Sedou, Europe Coordinator, World Organisation Against Torture(OMCT)

Contact: Russell Pickard, OSI-Brussels, +32 2 505 4646; russell.pickard@osi-eu.org