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From:	General Secretariat of the Council
On:	27 May 2024
To:	Delegations
Subject:	Council Conclusions on the alignment of the EU Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy 2020-2024 with the Multiannual Financial Framework 2021-2027

Delegations will find attached Council Conclusions on the alignment of the EU Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy 2020-2024 with the Multiannual Financial Framework 2021-2027, approved by the Council at its 4028th meeting held on 27 May 2024.

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Council Conclusions on the alignment of the EU Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy 2020-2024 with the Multiannual Financial Framework 2021-2027

1. The Council underlines the collective Team Europe approach to implement the commitments of the EU Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy 2020-2024 at global, regional and country level, including through the work of the High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, the European Commission, the EU Special Representative for Human Rights, the European External Action Service, EU Delegations and Offices, CSDP missions and operations and the contributions of Member States and civil society partners.
2. The Action Plan has been implemented in an international environment marked by the rise of armed conflicts, authoritarianism, and a worldwide pushback against human rights, including gender equality. In this context, the Council recalls the EU's strong efforts to support multilateralism that promotes the rule-based international order with the UN human rights system at its centre. The EU renews its commitment to all human rights as universal, indivisible, interdependent and interrelated, be they civil, cultural, economic, political or social. The EU reiterates its commitment to equality and non-discrimination and to the entitlement of all persons, to enjoy the full range of human rights and fundamental freedoms, and to the participation of, inter alia, youth, girls and women, persons with disabilities and LGBTI persons, as well as to the protection of those who are in disadvantaged, vulnerable and marginalised situations, including children. The democratic backsliding across the world, the persistent erosion of human rights, disinformation and the malign use of rapidly evolving technologies confirm the need for resolute, effective and coherent action to uphold and advance human rights and democratic principles and values, to further integrate them in all EU external policies and to demonstrate their crucial importance for peaceful and prosperous societies.

3. Effective implementation of the Action Plan, including through the Thematic Programme on Human Rights and Democracy under the Neighbourhood Development and International Cooperation Instrument – Global Europe for the period 2021-2027, which is firmly rooted in the objectives and priorities of the Action Plan, is essential to ensure continued strong support to protect democracy and promote respect for human rights.
4. The Council notes that the Mid-term Review of the Action Plan concluded that its priorities are still valid and that this Action Plan benefited from its alignment with the current Multiannual Financial Framework. This crucial alignment should continue, as it allowed relevant thematic and geographic programmes to contribute directly to the implementation of the priorities of the Action Plan, thus ensuring its impact and effectiveness.
5. With a view to maximising the synergy between the Action Plan and the thematic and geographic programmes, the Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy 2020-2024 is hereby extended until 2027 in order to align it with the full cycle of the Multiannual Financial Framework 2021-2027.
6. The Council reaffirms the EU's commitment to promoting a global and holistic approach to build resilient, inclusive and democratic societies in a challenging global context. Supporting civil society and human rights defenders, strengthening election integrity, enhancing participation in public and political life, especially for women and youth, are core priorities of the EU's foreign policy. Combatting corruption, strengthening the rule of law, supporting independent and pluralistic media and the safety of journalists, fighting disinformation and contributing to a digital sphere that safeguards human rights and democracy, remain central in the EU's external action.

7. The EU will continue to apply a human rights based approach to its external action and to promote women's and girls' empowerment and full enjoyment of human rights, gender equality as a priority across all areas of action. The EU will continue to tackle all forms of discrimination, with a specific attention to multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination, including on grounds of sex, race, ethnic or social origin, religion or belief, political or any other opinion, disability, age, sexual orientation and gender identity. The EU reaffirms its commitment to respect, protect and fulfil economic, social and cultural rights and reiterates its stance that the full realization of all human rights is a precondition to achieve an inclusive and sustainable development. The EU will expand its focus on business and human rights. The EU will also address the human rights effects of environmental degradation and climate change.
8. In moving forward with the implementation of the Action Plan, the EU will continue to strive for coherence and seek synergies at country, regional and global level. The EU will continue to widen and deepen bilateral partnerships and build new cross-regional coalitions. The EU will continue to forcefully denounce human rights violations and abuses, violations of international humanitarian law, attacks against democracy, including the repression of civic space and independent media. The EU will continue its action to end impunity and to strengthen accountability and ensure compliance with international law, including human rights and humanitarian law, mobilising where appropriate the Global Human Rights Sanction Regime. The EU will also intensify its efforts to promote a positive narrative underlining the multiple benefits that the advancement of human rights and democracy brings to all stakeholders in support of sustainable development, peace and security and the advancement of equal, diverse, pluralistic and inclusive societies. The EU seeks to lead by example by fulfilling its own obligations, responding to its own challenges and aspiring to a coherent approach in all its internal and external policies.

9. As the implementation of the Action Plan continues, the Council recalls the central role of the EU Special Representative for Human Rights in guiding this process, and invites partners across all regions, including civil society organisations, human rights defenders, democracy support actors, international organisations and private actors, to join efforts with a renewed sense of urgency to uphold and advance human rights and democracy across the world.
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