

Civil Society Forum South Neighbourhood

Brussels, July 10-12, 2017

Concept note on the thematic group “Governance and Human Rights”

The European Union has reiterated, in a number of resolutions, its commitment to encourage and assist democratization processes and its engagement with civil society as a guarantee for more inclusive and stable societies. Both, the EU Agenda for Change, adopted in 2011 and the European Neighborhood Policy, reviewed in 2015, recognize that human rights, democracy and other key elements of good governance, are vital for inclusive and sustainable development, and shall feature more prominently in all its partnerships. They renew EU support to civil society as a crucial component of any democratic system, engaging in initiatives to foster pluralism and further participatory democracy and governance.

Building on the dialogues and main recommendations which emerged from the Regional Civil Society Preparatory Seminars which took place in Tunis on 25-27 April 2017, the Thematic Group on Human Rights and Governance, will look at the ways and means for CSOs to engage with EU in securing meaningful democracy and governance improvements at national and regional levels. The objective is to have a genuine policy dialogue on related topics, between representatives from the EU institutions and civil society from the Southern Neighbourhood countries (Northern Africa and Middle East).

The thematic workshop will combine a plenary dialogue session followed by three sub-themes working groups, in order to create a more participative and inclusive environment for discussions and to come up with relevant and concrete recommendations for an enhanced partnership between CSOs and the EU.

A Plenary Dialogue on Human Rights and Governance (75 min)

This plenary session will allow space for dialogue between Civil Society representatives and political leadership, senior management and practitioners from the EU. It will address the EU policies and cooperation in promoting democracy and human rights with national institutions and mechanisms, including human rights institutions, as well as civil society.

3 sub-themes working groups: (about 90 min each)

Based on Tunis Civil Society recommendations, three priority topics and sessions were identified to open the dialogue:

Session 1: Enhancing Democratic Transition and Governance: Tools and mechanism to ensure CSOs and national human rights defenders involvement in the implementation and periodic monitoring and evaluation of EU policies in the area of democracy and governance.

This session will look at democratization processes across the MENA countries with a special focus on governance, anti-corruption, democratic transition and elections. It will be particularly devoted to explain the EU framework and priorities for cooperation in the area of governance and democracy consolidation processes.

It will also discuss the possibility of a formal mechanism/structure for CSOs to engage with EU in securing meaningful democracy and governance improvements at national and regional levels and to ensure periodic monitoring of the progress made.

EU speakers: Toby Sexton (EEAS) to present ENP/political framework,
Alexandre Baron (DG NEAR, Human Rights) to present EU financial assistance in the area of governance.

Invited EU representatives:

Institution	Name	Function
DG NEAR	Alexandre Baron	CoTE RoL/FR
	Carolina Lasso-Navarro	CoTE RoL/FR
	Gaby Hagmüller	CoTE Civil Society
	Francesca Gilli or	Tunisia Desk
	Helena Valdenasi	
	Massimiliano Messi	Jordan Desk
DG DEVCO	Angelo Borgogni	Palestine Desk
	Leslie Pierrard	B1, Neighbourhood South
	Thomas Millar	B1, HoS Democracy
EEAS	Sylwia Domisiewicz	Global 3, Democracy Support/Elections
EEAS/EUSR Human Rights	Mychelle Rieu	Advisor to the EUSR
	Caroline Stein	Advisor to the EUSR

Session 2: Violence against women and women's rights protection: Why should civil society advocate for the signing of the Istanbul Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence?

Combatting violence against women is one of the European Commission's priorities for 2017. This is why the Commission just signed the [Istanbul Convention](#) and has launched a year-long campaign to raise awareness of all forms of violence towards women, which is using the hashtag [#SayNoStopVAW](#) on social media.

This session will be devoted to explore actions needed to end gender-based violence and protect women victims of violence. Specific attention will be given to the Council of Europe's Istanbul Convention, which provides the most progressive and comprehensive international standard on combatting violence against women and girls. The Convention recognises that violence against women constitutes a violation of their human rights. It also addresses violence against women through measures aimed at preventing violence, protecting and supporting its victims, and prosecuting the perpetrators. The role of civil society in advocating for the convention and encouraging their governments to ratify and implement it will be also addressed.

EU speakers: Ms. Ilaria Brazzoduro (DG Justice, Gender Equality) to speak about the Istanbul Convention

Invited EU representatives:

Institution	Name	Function
DG NEAR	Alexandre Baron	CoTE RoL/FR
	Irene Mingasson	B2 HoU
	Myriam Ibanez Mendizabal	B2, Gender, Neighbourhood South
	Gaby Hagmüller	CoTE Civil Society
	Katja de Sadeleer	Egypt Desk (VAW specific projects/CfP)
	Jean-Marie Moreau	Morocco Desk (budget support with gender/VAW component)
	Iba Abdo	Syria Desk
DG DEVCO	Leslie Pierrard	B1, Neighbourhood South
	Marina Marchetti	B1, Gender
EEAS	Luigia di Gisi	Global 1, Gender focal point
	Helen Gonnord	Global 1, Gender focal point
	Anu Pulkinnen	MENA focal point
	Adeline Torcol	MENA focal point
EEAS/EUSR Human Rights	Mychelle Rieu	Advisor to the EUSR
	Caroline Stein	Advisor to the EUSR
DG JUST	Gianina Popescu	Unit 02 – International coordination
	Ilaria Brazzoduro	Unit D2 – Gender Equality
	Emilie Jarrett	Unit D2 – Gender equality

Session 3: Protecting the rights of vulnerable groups and preventing discrimination: What strategies can civil society and the EU pursue to prevent discrimination of minorities and LGBTI in particular?

As part of its efforts to abolish any kind of discrimination against individuals, the EU works to uphold the human rights of LGBTI persons – who should be able to live free from discrimination on grounds of sexual orientation or gender identity. In June 2013, the EU adopted [guidelines for supporting LGBTI persons' human rights](#), to be used by EU staff around the world in connection with human rights country strategies and civil society organizations.

This session will be devoted to the EU's diplomatic efforts to eliminating discriminatory laws and policies against LGBTI persons and supporting and protecting human rights defenders. Different

strategies and modes of actions of civil society organizations and human rights activists to assess LGBTI human rights issues, protect vulnerable groups and fight various forms of discrimination will be analyzed, together with the international and regional instruments that are relevant for the rights of minority groups.

Invited EU representatives:

Institution	Name	Function
DG NEAR	Alexandre Baron	CoTE RoL/FR
	Carolina Lasso-Navarro	CoTE RoL/FR
	Gaby Hagmüller	CoTE Civil Society
	Francesca Gilli or	Tunisia Desk
	Helena Valdenasi	
	Fabienne Bessonne	Lebanon Desk
	Katja de Sadeleer	Egypt Desk
	Jean-Marie Moreau	Morocco Desk
DG DEVCO	Leslie Pierrard	B1, Neighbourhood South
	Maxence Daublain	B1, Programme Manager
EEAS	Victoria Correa	Global 1, LGBTI
	Tove Gant	Global 1, Anti-Discrimination
EEAS/EUSR Human Rights	Mychelle Rieu	Advisor to the EUSR
	Caroline Stein	Advisor to the EUSR