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# 27 FEBRUARY 2018

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## World NGO Day

Bruxelles, 26/02/2018 - 20:35, UNIQUE ID: 180226\_23

Statements by the HR/VP

### Statement by High Representative/ Vice-President Federica Mogherini on the occasion of World NGO Day

On World NGO Day, we celebrate the outstanding role civil society plays in ensuring that fundamental human rights are respected, that no one is left behind. Marking this day is more important than ever as we are living in difficult times for NGOs and for civil society around the world, and the space for the defence of human rights is shrinking.

Civil society organisations are a voice for those who are too often not heard. They have the courage to stand up against injustices, even if sometimes with their own lives for themselves.

The European Union will continue to stand in for an open and conducive environment for civil society, in Europe and in partner countries. We will redouble our efforts to protect the democratic space at all levels and we will continue to support the invaluable work of Civil Society Organisations and cooperate with them all around the world. NGOs play a central role in the European Union's external financing instruments, that they help to design, to implement and to monitor. Our annual support worth €2 billion represents 73% of the world's support to local civil society organisations in our partner countries. This makes the EU the leading donor worldwide supporting local civil society. Because we need to invest in human rights, invest in civil society work and guarantee fundamental freedoms to achieve sustainable security.

The European Union proudly leads the world's largest programme for the protection of Human Rights Defenders under the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights. Under a dedicated project, we have allocated 338 emergency grants over the past 18 months to provide support to Human Rights Defenders in a total of 64 countries. Because without civil society work, also the European Union's work would not be effective.

The European Union will never leave human rights defenders and civil society organisations alone: it's the most invaluable partnership we can rely on to defend rights and build opportunities. Together.

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