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27 FEBRUARY 2019

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

Bruxelles, 26/02/2019 - 12:00, UNIQUE ID: 190225_13

Statements by the HR/VP

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On World NGO Day, we celebrate the relentless and invaluable role of civil society organisations in protecting and fighting for fundamental human rights, democracy, and sustainable development for all. Their continuous commitment to these fundamental values makes their contributions indispensable to the construction of resilient, inclusive and diverse societies.

Today we see, both inside and outside Europe, trends of systematic attempts to constrain the capacities of civil society actors to perform their crucial role. Therefore more important than ever to defend and promote safe spaces where civil society organisations can operate without fears of repression, sanction or arbitrary detention.

That is why engaging with and empowering actors of the civil society is at the forefront of European Union's action. As European Union, we are working with NGOs to protect and promote human rights, democracy and sustainable development in places where neither these values nor the work of civil society organisations are respected. The implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development by the EU is highly depending of the NGOs' ability to operate on the ground.

The European Union will continue to foster safe and open environments for civil society participation in Europe and around the world, notably through a financial contribution of €2 billion per year, as well as through the organisation of fora such as the annual EU-NGO Forum on Human Rights where EU and civil society leaders have a unique opportunity to exchange views.

The European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR) is one of the largest EU instruments dedicated to supporting civil society which has contributed to create and funds the European Union Human Rights Defenders mechanism – **ProtectDefenders.eu** – that trains, protects and assists human rights defenders at high risk and facing difficult situations worldwide. Since 2014, close to 1000 human rights defenders and their families benefited from over 400 emergency grants provided by the EIDHR Emergency Fund for Human Rights Defenders at Risk.

Civil society organisations are key partners for the European Union in designing and implementing public policies, such as the external financing instrument and their engagement is integral to effective European external action. The European Union will keep being committed to defend and promote this partnership and do everything in its power to ensure that civil society organisations and human rights advocates have the freedom to operate freely and safely everywhere in the world.

Languages:

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