



EUROPEAN COMMISSION

*Brussels, 26.3.2020
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*Dr. Wolfgang Schäuble
President of the Bundestag
Platz der Republik 1
D – 11011 Berlin*

Dear President,

The European Commission would like to thank the German Bundestag for its continued monitoring of the human rights and democracy situation around the globe. The European Commission takes good note of the Opinion adopted by the German Bundestag in December 2019 on the European Union Annual Reports on Human Rights and Democracy in the World in 2016, 2017 and 2018.

The promotion and protection of human rights and democracy are and must remain at the heart of our work. This is a collective endeavour and we continue to strive to enhance the effectiveness of our engagement in and with third countries. This requires coordinated action by the European External Action Service, the European Commission, the EU Special Representative for Human Rights and European Union delegations around the world. Close coordination with Member States and consultation with civil society is crucial as is the contribution made by national parliaments and the European Parliament.

Respect for human rights by candidate countries and potential candidates for accession to the European Union is essential. In line with the Copenhagen criteria¹, all countries seeking to accede to the Union must demonstrate a credible commitment to promoting and protecting human rights. The European Commission will continue to monitor closely the situation in accession countries through the annual Enlargement Package reports², as well as through the European Union Annual Report on Human Rights and Democracy in the World.

Human rights will also continue to be raised systematically in political dialogues with the candidate countries and potential candidate countries for accession to the European Union. The European Commission will continue to assist these countries in making progress on human rights through technical and financial support to both governments and non-governmental organisations in the region.

¹ https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/sites/near/files/enlargement-methodology_en.pdf

² https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/countries/package_en

The next European Union Annual Report on Human Rights and Democracy in the World covering 2019 is expected to be adopted by the Foreign Affairs Council this spring. The report will outline the European Union activities in the final phase of implementation of the European Union Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy (2015-19).

The European Commission appreciates the active support of the German Bundestag in promoting and protecting the respect for human rights and democracy. We look forward to continuing our constructive cooperation in the future, including in the framework of the forthcoming third Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy covering the period 2020-2024.

Yours sincerely,

*Maroš Šefčovič
Vice-President*

*Josep Borrell Fontelles
High Representative/Vice-President*