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GLOBAL CSW welcomes new EU strategy on human rights

Christian Solidarity Worldwide (CSW) welcomes the EU's commitment to developing public guidelines on freedom of religion or belief, as part of a new human rights package adopted by the EU Foreign Affairs Council on June 25, which places human rights and democracy at the heart of EU external policy.

The Strategic Framework and Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy comprises principles, objectives, priorities and action points to advance the protection and promotion of human rights in EU foreign policy, including a mandate for appointing an EU Special Representative for Human Rights in the near future.

CSW believes that the action point committing the EU to develop public guidelines on freedom of religion or belief is a necessary step in order to increase the EU's visibility and accountability in promoting this fundamental right around the world. CSW urges the EU to engage with civil society when the new guidelines are being drafted and implemented.

This comes as the Foreign Affairs Council adopted Conclusions on Pakistan and Egypt, highlighting in both cases the importance of religious freedom in ensuring stable, peaceful and democratic societies.

Sofia Lemmetyinen, Senior EU Advocate says, "CSW welcomes the new EU Strategic Framework and Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy, which is a real opportunity for the EU to strengthen the promotion and protection of human rights, including religious freedom, around the world. Along with other members of the Human Rights and Democracy Network (HRDN), we urge the EU to implement the package in a transparent and accountable way, considering civil society actors as strategic partners in this process. Real work starts now to ensure mainstreaming of human rights into all EU institutions, the mechanisms and policies."

Notes to Editors:

1. CSW is a coordinating troika member of the Human Rights and Democracy Network (HRDN), a platform of more than 40 organizations operating at the EU level.
2. The EU Strategic Framework and Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy can be found [here](#).
3. The Council Conclusions on Pakistan can be found [here](#).
4. In its conclusions regarding Egypt, the Council reiterated "the duty to respect the rule of law and to protect human rights and fundamental freedoms for all, including freedoms of expression, assembly, and religion or belief." The EU also highlighted "the important role of an active and independent civil society as a key component of any democratic society." The Council Conclusions on Egypt can be found [here](#).