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GLOBAL | CSW Reaffirms Commitment to Advocacy with EU Institutions

The United Kingdom's historic vote to leave the European Union (EU) will affect the political structures within which CSW advocates. Although the full impact is yet to be realized, CSW remains committed to engaging with EU institutions as we advocate for freedom of religion or belief (FoRB) worldwide.

Spearheaded by our Brussels office, CSW will continue to work with stakeholders such as the European External Action Service (EEAS), the different permanent representations, the European Commission, European Parliament (EP) officials and Members of the European Parliament (MEPs), as well as other human rights organizations.

The EU played an important role in developing legislation that has enriched the global human rights system, and in recent years, it has adopted a number of important measures to promote, protect and advance FoRB in its activities and through its delegations worldwide. These measures include the EU Guidelines on FoRB, raising FoRB during bilateral human rights dialogues, funding for FoRB-related projects, a new intergroup on FoRB in the European Parliament, and most recently, the appointment by the Commission of an EU Special Envoy on FoRB.

At the UN Human Rights Council (HRC), the EU delegation has consistently promoted FoRB and been an important voice promoting this fundamental right during country-specific human rights reviews at the HRC and by sponsoring meetings and events to address it.

We hope, in the spirit of international cooperation, the new UK government will continue to liaise with EU member states and the EEAS on human rights issues and will publicly raise human rights concerns during bilateral talks with other nations.

CSW particularly urges the UK government to honor its commitment to protect and promote the right to FoRB, as articulated in the 2015 Foreign and Commonwealth Office Human Rights and Democracy report; remaining a member of the European Court of Human Rights, which has a commendable record in protecting this right; and by ensuring that trade and human rights are treated as complementary, rather than competing priorities.