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HRC63 - EU Statement - HRC63 Item 4 Human Rights Situations that require the Council's attention

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European Union

UNITED NATIONS HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL

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Item 4

Statement by

H.E. Ms. Deike Potzel

Ambassador, Permanent Representative of the European Union

Geneva, 22 September 2026

- CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY –

HRC63 Item 4 Human Rights Situations that require the Council's attention

EU statement

Mister President,

I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union.

Albania, Liechtenstein and Montenegro align themselves with the statement.

With regard to the situations in **Belarus, Burundi, Venezuela, Nicaragua, Haiti, Myanmar**

and eastern DRC, we would like to refer to our statements during the respective interactive dialogues.

During the General debate on item 2, we have explicitly also addressed the human rights situation in a number of countries.

The EU remains strongly committed to **fighting impunity and ensuring accountability** for all violations and abuses of international law, including international human rights law and international humanitarian law wherever they take place. Accountability is key to the sustainable resolution of conflicts. Together with partners across the world, the EU will continue to support UN special procedures, mandate holders and other independent investigations into violations and abuses of human rights and violations of international humanitarian law, including those that may amount to international crimes.

We reaffirm our unwavering support to the **international criminal justice system**, particularly to the International Criminal Court, as well as our commitment to upholding the Rome Statute and preserving the ICC's independence and integrity. We will continue to condemn attacks or threats against the Court, elected officials, personnel and those cooperating with the Court, including civil society representatives. We deeply regret the latest decisions by some countries to initiate the process of withdrawal from the ICC Rome Statute. Such steps weaken the international criminal justice system and undermine global collective efforts to ensure accountability for the most serious crimes. We note however that other countries are preparing to accede to the Rome Statute and we encourage them to continue on that path. We firmly oppose and condemn any actions that seek to undermine the independence and integrity of the ICC.

We reiterate our condemnation in the strongest possible terms of **Russia's illegal, unprovoked and unjustified war of aggression against Ukraine** that grossly violates international law. We demand that Russia ceases its aggression, withdraws all forces and military equipment from the entire territory of Ukraine immediately, completely and unconditionally, and fully respects Ukraine's sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity within its internationally recognised borders. We condemn in the strongest possible terms Russia's continuing violations of international human rights law and international humanitarian law in Ukraine, such as summary executions of prisoners of war and civilian detainees, arbitrary detention, systematic and widespread use of torture and other forms of ill-treatment, including rape and other conflict-related sexual and gender-based violence. The EU strongly condemns Russia for systematically and deliberately targeting Ukraine's civilian and energy infrastructure resulting in an increasing number of civilians killed and injured, due to Russia's use of massive drone attacks, ballistic and cruise missiles and other explosive weapons, including with wide area effect in urban areas, and on other civilian infrastructure and civilians. According to the UN Independent International

Commission of Inquiry on Ukraine, Russian authorities have committed crimes against humanity of torture, enforced disappearances, murder and forcible transfer of population, and war crimes, including deliberate and intensified targeting of civilians. We call on Russia, and its accomplice Belarus, to immediately end the grave violation of international law, including child deportation and forcible transfer of Ukrainian children which not only constitute war crimes, but also according to the Commission of Inquiry – due to the scale and scope of these crimes – amount to crimes against humanity. We call on Russia to immediately cease all measures to change the legal status of Ukrainian children, including their adoption, and to ensure their immediate, safe and unconditional return to Ukraine and reunification with their families. We call on Russia to immediately stop the militarisation and indoctrination of Ukrainian minors and youth. The EU deplores the intensification of systemic suppression of Ukrainian identity, as well as various forms of repression, forced conscription, religious persecution and russification of the Ukrainian population living in the temporary occupied territories of Ukraine. The EU is firmly committed to ensuring full accountability for all international crimes and human rights violations and abuses stemming from Russia's war of aggression, including through investigations by the prosecutor of the ICC, and to uphold the rights of victims to justice, reparation and guarantees of non-repetition. We encourage further sustained efforts within the framework of the Council of Europe towards the operationalisation of the Special Tribunal for the Crime of Aggression against Ukraine and the International Claims Commission for Ukraine. We remain steadfast in our commitment to a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in Ukraine, grounded in the principles of the UN Charter and international law, and welcome all efforts towards that end.

Regarding **Russia**, the EU condemns the structural system of human rights violations, which are part of a further intensifying systematic, state-sponsored internal repression, including the use of arbitrary detention and widespread and systematic use of torture and ill-treatment. The EU is deeply concerned about the closed civic space, unabated systematic crackdown on civil society, especially on human rights defenders, LGBTI persons, lawyers, Indigenous Peoples, independent media and journalists, as well as the repression of political opposition in the context of the Duma election and beyond, and critical voices throughout Russia and active outside the country, with particular concern for both individuals and organisations designated as foreign agents, whose human rights continue to be violated. We urge Russia to end transnational repression, to abolish its repressive legislation, and to align it with international human rights law and to ensure a safe and enabling online and offline environment for all. We also call on Russia to end its political misuse of the judiciary and law enforcement, recalling the importance of the independence of the judiciary and fair trial rights. We remain concerned about extensive abuse of counter-terrorism, extremism, treason, espionage and other national security-

related provisions in the Russian Criminal Code to target dissent, anti-war expression and peaceful protests. We reiterate our call for the immediate and unconditional release and rehabilitation of all political prisoners and persons arbitrarily detained. We are also deeply concerned about the Russian authorities' expanding control over internet infrastructure, including through State-directed filtering, blocking and internet shutdowns, as well as the instrumentalization of 'extremism' legislation to repress online applications and content. We recall the obligation under international law to conduct independent and transparent investigations into all deaths in detention. The EU calls on Russia to fully implement all outstanding rulings of the European Court of Human Rights. The EU also calls on Russia to respect, protect and fulfil the rights of Indigenous Peoples as set out in the UNDRIP and other international human rights law. The EU urges Russia to cooperate fully with the UN and all special procedures, and expresses its full support for the mandate of the Special Rapporteur.

The EU strongly condemns the gross, systematic and widespread human rights violations, restrictions to political participation and to independent media in **Belarus**. The EU remains concerned about intimidation campaigns against all segments of Belarusian society. The EU urges Belarus to immediately and unconditionally release and rehabilitate all political prisoners, ensuring the resolution of judicial processes upon their release and ending all forms of harassment or pressure that may result in their forced departure, deportation or deprivation of consular services. The EU demands that the Belarusian authorities stop their involvement in Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine and halt their hybrid attacks at the EU external borders, including the instrumentalisation of migrants for political purposes, in complicity with Russia.

We express our grave concern over the deteriorating situation in the **occupied Palestinian territory**, including the persistent and devastating humanitarian crisis in Gaza, and we strongly condemn all violations of international human rights law and international humanitarian law. We emphasize the protected status under IHL of civilians, including humanitarian aid workers, health and medical workers, and journalists and media personnel, which includes both international and local staff. The EU recalls the need to fully implement the International Court of Justice (ICJ) orders, which are legally binding, and takes note of its advisory opinions.

The EU calls on **Israel** to allow immediate, unimpeded access and sustained distribution of humanitarian assistance at scale into and throughout Gaza and to enable the UN and its agencies, including UNRWA, and humanitarian organisations, to work independently and impartially to save lives and reduce suffering. In this regard, the EU recalls the ICJ's advisory opinions. The EU calls on Israel to reopen all Gaza border crossings, as well as the medical corridor between Gaza and the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, allow access

for international media, and reverse its decision regarding the NGO registration law so that NGOs can continue their important work, including fulfilling their humanitarian mandate. Hamas must be fully disarmed and cannot be part of any solution in Gaza. The EU strongly condemns the continued and growing settler violence against Palestinian civilians. Israel must make further efforts to prevent settler violence. The EU calls on the Government of Israel to reverse the expansion of settlements, which are illegal under international law, and to refrain from any annexation and to hold violent settlers accountable. The EU stresses that businesses should not bid for construction contracts for E1 or other settlement developments and underlines the legal and reputational consequences for businesses participating in settlement construction, including the risk of serious breaches of international law. The EU is deeply concerned by the adoption of the Death Penalty Bill by the Israeli Parliament and the discriminatory character of the law. We urge Israel to abide by its previous principled position and with its obligations under international law as occupying power, as well as its commitment to human rights and to democratic principles, as reflected in the provisions of the EU-Israel Association Agreement. The EU continues to support the Commission of Inquiry and other relevant OHCHR mandates. The EU reaffirms its unwavering support for the international criminal justice system, particularly to the International Criminal Court, as well as its commitment to upholding the Rome Statute and preserving the ICC's independence and integrity.

The EU reiterates its firm commitment to a comprehensive, just, and lasting peace based on the two-state solution where two democratic states, Israel and Palestine, live side-by-side in peace within secure and recognised borders. The EU recalls the adoption by the UN General Assembly of the 'New York Declaration' and relevant UN Security Council Resolutions.

The human rights situation in Iran remains deeply alarming with Iranian people also exposed to the consequences of the war. The EU condemns the persistently high rate of executions, with 2025 recording the highest number in years. The authorities have further intensified the use of the death penalty as a tool to silence dissent, including against individuals arrested in connection with the January 2026 and the 2022 protests. The arbitrary detention of peaceful protesters, activists and human rights defenders is of grave concern. Restrictions on freedom of opinion and expression, offline and online, and other civil and political rights are unacceptable. The systematic discrimination, in law and in practice, against women and girls and persons belonging to religious, linguistic and ethnic minorities remains equally troubling. The EU calls on the Iranian regime to cease the violence and repression, including transnational repression, against its own people and to respect the universal human rights and fundamental freedoms of the Iranian people, including the right to choose their own future. Full cooperation with the independent international Fact Finding Mission remains essential. The EU reiterates its full support to

both the Fact-Finding Mission and the Special Rapporteur. The EU deplores the loss of all civilian life in the context of the recent military escalation, and calls for de-escalation and maximum restraint, the protection of civilians and civilian infrastructure, and full respect of international law, including the principles of the United Nations Charter, and international humanitarian law as well as full respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of neighbouring countries.

We reiterate our concerns about the very serious human rights situation in **China, including in Tibet, Xinjiang and Inner Mongolia**. We urge China to abide by its obligations under national law, including its own Constitution, and international law, to respect, protect and fulfil human rights for all and to uphold the rule of law. We also urge China to abolish the death penalty and as a first step to introduce a moratorium on its use and to adopt rigorous and transparent procedures for reviewing capital sentences and reporting death penalty cases. Civil society continues to be exposed to harassment, intimidation and surveillance, including to transnational repression. China must respect the principle of non-refoulement and refrain from extraterritorial activities (including coercion) that are not in line with international law.

We recall our concerns related to the new Law on Promoting Ethnic Unity and Progress, which entered into force on 1 July 2026 and may further restrict the cultural, linguistic and religious rights of persons belonging to ethnic and religious minorities, and have extraterritorial effects. We condemn all reprisals against individuals and/or civil society organizations and we condemn the prosecution of persons belonging to ethnic or religious groups, including Falun Gong practitioners, in China as well as abroad. We reiterate the rights of persons belonging to religious groups to conduct their basic affairs without interference and freely choose their religious leaders. We call for the release of all those arbitrarily detained for peacefully exercising their rights to freedom of religion or belief.

Numerous reports by UN Treaty Bodies and Special Rapporteurs, and in particular OHCHR's assessment report on human rights in China's **Xinjiang** Uyghur Autonomous Region, confirm that the human rights situation requires the urgent attention of the Chinese Government and UN bodies and the human rights system. We remain concerned about political re-education and mass arbitrary detentions, enforced disappearances, widespread surveillance, including Residential Surveillance in a Designated Location (RSDL), systemic and severe restrictions on the exercise of human rights and fundamental freedoms, including freedom of religion or belief. We urge the eradication of forced labour and labour transfer schemes. We remain concerned about reports on torture, forced abortion and sterilization, birth control and family separation policies, and sexual and gender-based violence, especially in Xinjiang. We urge China to cooperate effectively with the UN High Commissioner and his Office, the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination

and the Committee against Torture, and with all international human rights mechanisms, including towards the implementation of the recommendations included in the assessment report on the human rights concerns in Xinjiang and follow-up to the report as well as through the facilitation of visits of the High Commissioner and the Special Procedures mandate holders to regions such as Xinjiang and Tibet.

The human rights situation in **Tibet** continues to be dire. Indicators of this include large-scale coercive enrolment in obligatory boarding schools and the suppression of protests. We are concerned about reports that Tibetan schools teaching Tibetan language and culture have been shut down and that Chinese authorities have insisted that all students attend state schools where Tibetan is only taught as a separate subject. We encourage China to cooperate with international human rights mechanisms, including all relevant Special Procedures mandates and treaty bodies, in particular the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination and the Committee against Torture.

We continue to closely monitor the situation and call for the immediate and unconditional release of human rights defenders, including Gulshan Abbas, Ekpar Asat, Chadrel Rinpoche, Chow Hang-tung, Lee Cheuk-yan, Rahile Dawut, Ding Jiaxi, Dong Yuyu, Du Bin, Gao Zhen, Gao Zhisheng, Go Sherab Gyatso, He Fangmei, Huang Qi, Huang Xueqin, Hushtar Isa, Yalkun Isa, Ji Xiaolong, Jimmy Lai, Peng Lifa, Qin Yongming, Ruan Xiaohuan, Semkyi Dolma, Tashi Dorje, Tashpolat Tiyp, Sakharov Prize winner Ilham Tohti, Wang Bingzhang, Pastor Wang Yi, Xie Yang, Xu Na, Xu Zhiyong, Yang Hengjun, Yang Maodong, Yin Xu'an, Zhang Yadi and Zhang Zhan, as well as EU citizen Gui Minhai whose right to consular access must be respected.

The EU remains concerned about the repressive use of national security legislation in **Hong Kong**, including its extraterritorial application, notably through repeated issuance of arrest warrants and bounties targeting individuals living outside Hong Kong. The EU is following with great concern the politically motivated national security trials of politicians, journalists, civil society actors and pro-democracy representatives. We call upon the authorities to consider their unconditional and immediate release.

The sweeping changes in the electoral system have further eroded democratic principles and political pluralism. The EU urges the Chinese government and the Hong Kong authorities to restore full respect for the rule of law, human rights, including fundamental freedoms, and democratic principles, and to preserve Hong Kong's high degree of autonomy under the 'one country, two systems' principle, in compliance with Hong Kong's Basic Law and China's domestic and international obligations.

Regarding the human rights situation in **Sudan**, the EU appreciates the indispensable work of the Independent International Fact Finding Mission (IFFM) for the Sudan under extremely

challenging conditions and its central role in advancing accountability, and supports the renewal of the mandate. We condemn the widespread violations of international humanitarian law by all parties and call on all parties to adhere to their obligations under international humanitarian law and human rights law and ensure the protection of civilians, including humanitarian personnel, and civilian infrastructure, and facilitate the rapid, sustained and unhindered humanitarian access throughout the country. We urge all parties to resume and engage constructively with negotiations toward an immediate and lasting ceasefire while respecting Sudan's sovereignty, unity and territorial integrity. External actors must stop fuelling the violence and supplying weapons or other support to the war. Systematic conflict-related sexual and gender-based violence continues to destroy both individuals and communities on a horrifying scale, with rape being used as a weapon of war. We support accountability for atrocity crimes that may amount to war crimes and crimes against humanity, including support for the ICC. We support the expansion of both the ICC mandate and the UN arms embargo to the whole of Sudan.

The EU reiterates its serious concerns about the deeply worrying and continued deterioration in the areas of democracy, rule of law, human rights, fundamental freedoms and the independence of the judiciary in **Türkiye**. The EU remains concerned about targeting of political parties, democratically elected mayors such as the mayor of Istanbul, civil society representatives, journalists, academics, human rights defenders, LGBTI persons, and others, including through arbitrary arrests and detentions as well as restrictions on freedom of expression and assembly. The rights of elected officials as well as the rights of peaceful assembly and freedom of association need to be fully respected. Political opposition must be free to operate, organise, and participate in the political process without fear of repression. As an EU candidate country and member of the Council of Europe, Türkiye is expected to apply the highest democratic standards and practices. In this context, in line with Article 46 of the ECHR, we call on Türkiye to comply with the judgements of the European Court of Human Rights, including the immediate release of Osman Kavala, confirmed once again by the ECHR on 25 August 2026, and Selahattin Demirtaş. The EU reiterates its calls on Türkiye to comply with its obligations under international law, including international human rights law and to respect, protect and fulfil human rights and the rule of law - including the property rights of persons belonging to minorities and legal entities representing minorities. Human rights are non-negotiable and will continue to be an integral part of EU-Türkiye relations.

The EU is deeply concerned about the aggravated insecurity and persistent grave human rights violations in the Central Sahel countries, including by non-state actors. The EU expresses very serious concerns about the massive abuses against civilians by all parties, as well as the severe restrictions on the political and civic space in **Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger**, including the dismantling of democratic institutions, dissolution of opposition

parties, and silencing of dissent through discriminatory conscription and arrest of human rights defenders, journalists and political opposition. The EU continues to call on the authorities in the Central Sahel countries to uphold human rights, international humanitarian law, and democratic values and principles through a comprehensive multi-layered approach to protect individual dignity, and support open and resilient societies. The EU deeply regrets the decision taken by the authorities of Niger, Mali and Burkina Faso as well as Chad to initiate their withdrawal from the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court.

Thank you.

EEAS