FOURTH NEGOTIATION MEETING BETWEEN THE CDDH AD HOC NEGOTIATION GROUP AND THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION ON THE ACCESSION OF THE EUROPEAN UNION TO THE EUROPEAN CONVENTION ON HUMAN RIGHTS

Meeting report

Strasbourg, Monday 21 January (2.00 pm) – Wednesday 23 January 2013 (4.30 pm)
Agora Building, Room G01
Council of Europe
1. **Opening of the meeting and adoption of the agenda**

1. The fourth negotiation meeting between the CDDH ad hoc negotiation group and the European Commission on the accession of the European Union to the European Convention on Human Rights was held on 21-23 January 2013, in Strasbourg, under the chairmanship of Ms Tonje Meinich (Norway). The list of participants appears in Appendix I. The agenda, as adopted, appears in Appendix II.

2. **Draft legal instruments on the accession of the European Union to the European Convention on Human Rights: examination of proposals for amendments**

2. After opening the meeting, the Chair gave the floor to a delegation which presented a common paper from 16 States which are not members of the European Union on major concerns regarding the Accession Agreement. In presenting the paper, it was indicated that the States which are not members of the EU welcomed the willingness of the EU to accede to the Convention. It was underlined that the main concern expressed in the document was to safeguard the integrity of the system, and that individual member States may have nuanced concerns on the different issues raised in the document. It was also underlined that this paper should not be seen as a counter-proposal to the Chairperson’s compromise proposals presented in document 47+1(2013)001, which had not been taken into consideration when drafting the paper for reasons of timing. After the presentation, individual member States made their own general remarks on their respective positions. The document appears as Appendix III to the present report.

3. The representative of the EU indicated that by seeking accession to the Convention the EU did not seek to obtain any advantage. The purpose of the amendments proposed by the EU was but to adequately reflect the specific nature of the EU. He shared the view that the nature, the integrity and the effectiveness of the Convention system should be preserved and underlined that the EU was willing to engage to reach a balanced compromise.

4. The Chair then presented her compromise proposals, contained in document 47+1(2013)001, underlining that she was aware that they required compromise efforts on all sides and expressing the hope that they could meet with many of the concerns expressed.

5. The participants agreed to amend the fifth paragraph of the preamble, in order to bring the wording more in line with Article 34 of the Convention, and to stress further the relevance of Article 34 in the context of the accession in the corresponding paragraphs of the explanatory report.

6. A tentative agreement was reached on redrafting Article 1, paragraph 2 of the Accession Agreement which suggests the insertion of a “bridging clause” in Article 59, paragraph 2, letter b of the Convention, to make explicit that the Accession Agreement shall be an integral part of the Convention.

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1 The States presenting the paper were: Andorra, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Iceland, Liechtenstein, Monaco, Montenegro, Norway, Serbia, Switzerland, Russian Federation, Turkey and Ukraine. During the meeting Georgia and Moldova also indicated that they associated themselves to the paper.
7. The participants also agreed that the wording of Article 59, paragraph 2, letter c, as proposed in Article 1, paragraph 2 of the Accession Agreement should not appear in the Convention but only in the Accession Agreement.

8. The participants indicated their readiness to accept the compromise proposed by the Chair as regards the insertion of a general attribution rule in the accession agreement (paragraph 2, letter c1, subparagraph aa) of the EU proposal. One delegation expressed however some hesitations, considering that this clause was not necessary and that it reaffirmed concepts deriving from general principles of international law.

9. As regards the more specific attribution rule proposed by the EU to deal with issues related to the common foreign and security policy of the EU (paragraph 2, letter c1, subparagraph bb) of the EU proposal, an agreement was reached not to include this clause as a separate sub-paragraph. The Secretariat proposed a further compromise, combining some additional wording to the general attribution clause and some wording in the explanatory report presenting the Court’s general approach to the matter, which would also apply in cases concerning acts or measures adopted in the context of the common foreign and security policy of the EU. This proposal was considered positively, subject to confirmation at the next meeting. The proposal appears in Appendix IV to the present report.

10. With respect to the interpretation clauses proposed in Article 1, paragraphs 3 to 5 of the Accession Agreement, on the basis of the discussion it was agreed to add to the explanatory report an explanation about the absence of a reference to Article 2 of Protocol No. 6 in the first indent of Article 1, paragraph 3. Concerning Article 2, paragraph 1 of Protocol No. 4, it was agreed to maintain the reference in the text of Article 1, paragraph 5 with a minor amendment.

11. Concerning the question of a possible extension of the co-respondent mechanism to situations in which an application directed against a State, which is not a member of the EU, puts into question the compatibility with the Convention of an international agreement between that State and the EU, the representative of the EU indicated his readiness to accept the compromise proposed by the Chair in document 47+1(2013)001. A number of States which are not members of the EU indicated that they could consider further the Chair’s proposal as part of a wider compromise package, while still expressing a preference for the proposal put forward in their common paper. In the absence of an agreement, it was decided to discuss this matter again at the next meeting.

12. The question of the non-binding character of the co-respondent mechanism (Article 3, paragraph 5) was discussed in the light of the preference expressed in the paper by many States which are not members of the EU for a binding mechanism, and of the position expressed by the EU and in the Chair’s document for keeping the mechanism as it currently stands. In this respect, the importance of the internal rules that the EU should adopt has been underlined. Also in this case, it was pointed out that the solution of this issue would depend on the general equilibrium of the text.

13. As regards the prior involvement procedure (Article 3, paragraph 6), the representatives of many States which are not members of the EU reiterated the concerns expressed in their paper, pointing out notably that part of the text defining the scope of the CJEU assessment was not pertinent for the Accession agreement since it dealt with EU internal matters. The representative of the EU reaffirmed the support of the EU and of its
member States for the current proposal. In the absence of an agreement, it was decided to resume discussion on this issue at the next meeting.

14. Similarly, many States which are not members of the EU explained that the draft Article 3, paragraph 7, did not respond sufficiently to their concerns about the Court’s actual margin of decision. In the absence of an agreement, it was decided to resume discussion on this issue at the next meeting.

15. As agreed at the previous meeting, the Secretariat presented its views on Article 7, paragraph 1, indicating a preference for the solution proposed in document 47+1(2012)R03, for reasons of simplicity and of institutional equilibrium. Bearing in mind the position expressed in their paper and the proposal made by the Chair, the representatives of States which are not members of the EU indicated a preference for a revision of Article 7 paragraph 1 to the effect that the EU shall not have voting rights in the Committee of Ministers except in situations where the latter exercises its functions under the Convention (Articles 26, 39, 46 and 47). Decisions mentioned in Article 7, paragraph 1, letters b) and c) could first be taken by the Committee of Ministers without the EU voting and then forwarded for acceptance to the EU. The Secretariat was asked to provide more detailed examination of the implications of the various alternatives presented in the document of the Chair with respect to the different types of acts that the Committee of Ministers may adopt, well in advance for discussion at the next meeting.

16. As regards the voting rights in cases involving the EU, a consensus was reached on the principle that the relevant rules should appear in a binding instrument to be adopted by the Committee of Ministers. Consensus was also reaffirmed on the approach proposed as regards “final resolutions” of the Committee of Ministers, although no final agreement was reached on the majority required for the adoption of such resolutions.

17. With respect to the elements presented by the Secretariat at the end of the previous meeting concerning other types of decisions, the proposal concerning the adoption of procedural decisions and decisions requesting information by a “hyper-minority” was in principle supported. On the contrary, as regards the other decisions, the States which are not members of the EU reiterated their reluctance about the inclusion of the “panel procedure” in the system. The Chair invited the Secretariat to present a new proposal based on other majority rules and not involving the use of a panel for discussion at the next meeting.

18. Finally, the representative of the EU suggested that Article 7, paragraph 2, letters b) and c) could possibly be merged, but no agreement was reached on the substance about how to deal with EU voting rights in cases concerning the other High Contracting Parties.

19. As regards the explanatory report, the Group agreed to amend Paragraph 24a according to the proposal presented by the EU, and decided to discuss the amendments proposed to Paragraph 23 at the next meeting.

3. Any other business

20. The Group agreed to hold its next meeting in Strasbourg from 2 to 5 April 2013. The Chair recalled that it will be the last negotiation meeting scheduled, and invited all the delegations to pursue discussions with a view to reaching a satisfactory compromise.
APPENDIX I
List of participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MEMBERS / MEMBRES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

**ALBANIA / ALBANIE**
Ms Ledina MANDIA, General State Advocate of the Republic of Albania, Ministry of Justice, Bulevardi “Zog I”, TIRANA
E-mail: ledina.mandija@avokaturaashtetit.gov.al

**ANDORRA / ANDORRE**
Mr Joan FORNER ROVIRA, Senior Legal Adviser, Government Agent to the European Court of Human Rights, Department of General and Legal Affairs, Ministry of Foreign Affairs
Tel.: (+376) 875 704 - Fax: (+376) 869 559
Email: joan_forner@govern.ad

**ARMENIA / ARMENIE**
Mr Levon AMIRJANYAN, Chef du département des affaires juridiques, Ministère des affaires étrangères, Place de la République, Maison de Gouvernement 2, Yerevan 0010
Tel: 00 37410 54 40 41 (ext. 278)
E-mail: l.amirjanyan@mfa.am

**AUSTRIA / AUTRICHE**
Mrs Leonore LANGE, Division for International Affairs and General Administrative Affairs, Federal Chancellery, Dpt. V/5, Constitutional Service, Ballhausplatz 2, 1010 Wien
Tel.: +43 1 53115 204029
E-mail: leonore.lange@bka.gv.at

**AZERBAIJAN / AZERBAIDJAN**
Mr Chingiz ASGAROV, Agent of the Government of the Republic of Azerbaijan at the European Court of Human Rights, Prezident Sarayi, İstiqlaliyyət küç.19, Baku A-1066
Tel/Fax: 00 994 124 923 920
E-mail: agent@pa.gov.az

**BELGIUM / BELGIQUE**
Mme Marjan JANSENS, Représentante Permanente Adjointe, Chancellerie, 41, allée de la Robertsau, 67000 Strasbourg, France
Tél.: 03 88 76 61 00 – Fax: 03 88 36 32 71
E-mail: marjan.janssens@diplobel.fed.be

**BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA / BOSNIE-HERZEGOVINE**
Ms Sandra MALEŠIĆ, Assistant Agent of the Council of Ministers, of Bosnia and Herzegovina before European Court of Human Rights, Dzemala Bijedica 39/II, 71000 Sarajevo
Tel/fax 00 387 33 730 490
E-mail: sandra.malesic@mhrr.gov.ba

**BULGARIA / BULGARIE**
Mr Dimitar PHILIPOV, Director, Human Rights Directorate, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Bulgaria, 2 "Alexander Jendov" street, 1113 Sofia
E-mail: dphilipov@mfa.bg

**CROATIA / CROATIE**
Mrs Romana KUZMANIĆ OLUIĆ, Counselor in the Division for Human Rights and International Regional Organizations and Initiatives, Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs, Directorate for Multilateral Affairs and Global Issues, N. Š. Zrinskog 7-8, HR 10000 Zagreb
Tel: 00 385 1 4597 783 - Fax: 00 385 1 4597416
E-mail: Romana.Kuzmanic-Oluic@mvep.hr

**CYPRUS / CHYPRE**
Mr. Nikolas KYRIAKOU, Counsel for the Republic, Law Office of the Republic, European Law Section, 1, Apelli Str., 1403 Nicosia
Tel.: 00 357 22 889153 - Fax: +357 22 889 230
E-mail: nkyriakou@law.gov.cy

**CZECH REPUBLIC / REPUBLIQUE Tchéque**
Mr Vit SCHORM, Government Agent, Ministry of Justice, Vyšehradská 16, 128 10 Praha 2
Tel: 00 420 221 997 442 - Fax: 00 420 221 997 445
E-mail: vschorm@msp.justice.cz

**DENMARK / DANEMARK**
Ms. Nina HOLST-CHRISTENSEN, Ministry of Justice, Slotsholmsgade 10, 1216 Copenhagen
E-mail: nhc@jm.dk

**ESTONIA / ESTONIE**
Ms Maris KUURBERG, Government Agent before the European Court of Human Rights, Legal Department, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Islandi väljak 1, 15049 Tallinn
Telephone +372 6377 400 ; +372 6377 439;
E-mail: maris.kuurberg@mfa.ee

Ms Arnika KALBUS, Legal Adviser, Permanent Representation of Estonia to the EU, Rue Guimard 11/13, 1040 Bruxelles
Tel: +32 2227 43 19 ; Fax: +32 2227 39 25
E-mail: arnika.kalbus@mfa.ee

**FINLAND / FINLANDE**
Mr Arto KOSONEN, Government Agent, Director, Unit for Human Rights Court and Conventions, Legal Service, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, P.O. Box 411, FI-00023 Government
Tel: 00 358 9 1605 5729 - Fax: 00 358 9 1605 5951
E-mail: arto.kosonen@formin.fi

Ms Maija FAURIE, Legal Officer, Unit for EU and Treaty Law, Legal Service, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, PO Box 416, 00023 Government, Finland
Tel. +358 9 160 55341 ; Mob. +358 40 509 2801
E-mail: Maija.Faurie@formin.fi

**FRANCE**
M. Emmanuel JAUFFRET, Sous-direction des droits de l'homme, Direction des affaires juridiques, Ministère des affaires étrangères et européennes, 57, bd des Invalides, 75700 Paris
Tél : 01 53 69 36 27; Fax : 01 53 69 36 74
E-mail : emmanuel.jauffret@diplomatie.gouv.fr

M. Jean-Baptiste LAIGNELOT, Conseiller juridique, Représentation Permanente de la France auprès de l’Union européenne, 14 Place de Louvain, 1000 Bruxelles, Belgique
Tel : +32.2.229.82.35
E-mail : jean-baptiste.laignelet@diplomatie.gouv.fr

**GEORGIA**
Mr Levan MESKHORADZE, Government Agent to the European Court of Human Rights, Head of Department of State Representation to the International Courts of Human Rights, 24 A, Gorgasali Str., Tbilisi, 0114
Tel.: +995 32 240 59 09
E-mail: lmeskhoradze@justice.gov.ge

**GERMANY / ALLEMAGNE**
Mr Hans-Jörg BEHRENS, Head of Unit IVC1, Human Rights Protection; Government Agent before the European Court of Human Rights, Bundesministerium der Justiz, Mohrenstr. 37, 10117 Berlin
Tel: 00 49 30 18 580 94 31 - Fax: 00 49 30 18 580 94 32
E-mail: behrens-ha@bmj.bund.de

Mrs Jutta KEMPER, Head of the division IV C 2, Bundesministerium der Justiz, Mohrenstr. 37, 10117 Berlin
E-mail: Kemper-Ju@bmj.bund.de

**GREECE / GRECE**
M. Elias KASTANAS, Conseiller juridique adjoint, Service juridique, Ministère des Affaires Etrangères, Athènes
E-mail: kastanas@mfa.gr

Mme Ourania PATSOPOULOU, Conseillère juridique, Chancellerie, 21, place Broglie - 67000 Strasbourg, France
Tél.: 03 88 32 88 18 – Fax: 03 88 23 12 46
E-mail: greekdelegce@wanadoo.fr

**HUNGARY / HONGRIE**
Ms Monika WELLER, Co-Agent for the Hungarian Government before the European Court of Human Rights, Ministry of Public Administration and Justice, Kossuth tér 4., 1055 Budapest,
Tel: 00 36 1 795 58 28
E-mail: monika.weller@kim.gov.hu

**ICELAND / ISLANDE**
Ms Bjorg T. THORARENSEN, Professor of Law, Ministry of the Interior, Sölvhólgötu 7, 150 Reykjavík
E-mail: bjorgtho@hi.is

**IRELAND / IRLANDE**
Mr Trevor REDMOND, Assistant Legal Adviser for the Government of Ireland, Legal Division, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 80 St Stephen's Green, Dublin 2
E-mail: Trevor.Redmond@dfa.ie

Mr David KELLY, Legal Counsellor at the Permanent Representation of Ireland to the European Union, Rue Froissart 50, 1040 Bruxelles, Belgium
Tel.: 00 32 2 2823 280
E-mail: David.Kelly@dfa.ie

**ITALY / ITALIE**
Cons. Amb. Stefania ROSINI, Ministero Affari Esteri – Servizio per gli affari giuridici, del contenzioso diplomatico e dei trattati, Piazzale della Farnesina 1, 00194 Roma
Tel: 06 36 91 24 60 - Fax: 06 323 0315
E-mail: stefania.rosini@esteri.it

**LATVIA / LETTONIE**
Ms Kristīne LĪCE, Government Agent, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Latvia
Kr.Valdemāra 3, Rīga, LV-1385
Tel.: +371 6701 6340 ; Mob.: +371 2027 2857 ; Fax: +371 6728 3335
E-mail: kristine.licis@mfa.gov.lv
Ms Inga REINE, Legal Advisor, Permanent Representation of the Republic of Latvia to the European Union, avenue des Arts 23, B-1000, Brussels, Belgium
E-mail: inga.reine@mfa.gov.lv

LIECHTENSTEIN
Mr Manuel FRICK, Deputy Permanent Representative to the Council of Europe, Office for Foreign Affairs, Heiligkreuz 14 – Postfach 684, FL- 9490 Vaduz
Tel: 00 423 236 7684 – Fax: 00 423 236 60 59
E-mail: manuel.frick@llv.li

LITHUANIA / LITUANIE
Mrs Elvyra BALTUTYTE, Agent of the Government of the Republic of Lithuania to the European Court of Human Rights, Ministry of Justice, Gedimino ave. 30/1, 01104 Vilnius
Tel: 00 3705 266 29 90 - Fax: 00 3705 266 28 73
E-mail: e.baltutyte@tm.lt

Ms Vygantė MILAŠIŪTĖ, Head of the Division of International Agreements Law Ministry of Justice of the Republic of Lithuania, International Law Department, Gedimino ave. 30, 01104 Vilnius
Tel.: (+370 5) 266 2930, Fax: (+370 5) 266 2854
E-mail: vygante.milasiute@tm.lt

LUXEMBOURG
Mme Brigitte KONZ, Conseillère à la Cour d’Appel, Bâtiment CR, Cité Judiciaire, L-2080 Luxembourg
Tel: 00 352 475981-279 - Fax: 00 352 475981-773
E-mail: brigitte.konz@justice.etat.lu

M. Robert BEVER, Expert au FREMP, représentation Permanente du Luxembourg, Bruxelles, Belgique

Mme Anne KAYSER-ATTUIL, Représentante Permanente Adjointe, Représentation Permanente du Luxembourg auprès du Conseil de l'Europe et Consulat Général, 65 allée de la Robertsau - F-67000 Strasbourg
Tél. :00 33 (0)3 88 15 26 36
E-mail : anne.kayser@mae.etat.lu

REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA/ REPUBLIQUE DE MOLDOVA
M. Sergiu MIHOV, Représentant Permanent Adjoint, Chancellerie, 16, allée Spach – 67000 Strasbourg, France
Tél.: 03 88 36 55 64 – Fax: 03 88 36 48 96
E-mail: strasbourg@mfa.md

MONTENEGRO
Mr Zoran PAZIN, State Agent to the ECHR, Serdara Jola Piletića 8/6, 81000 Podgorica
Tel: 00 382 20 244 036
E-mail: s.agent@gsv.gov.me

THE NETHERLANDS / PAYS-BAS
Mr Roeland BÖCKER, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, International Law Division, PO Box 20061, The Hague, 2500 EB
Tel: 00 31 70 348 48 98 - Fax: 00 31 70 348 51 28
E-mail: roeland.bocker@minbuza.nl

Mr Martijn DE GRAVE, Legal counsel at the Permanent Representation of the Netherlands to the EU in Brussels, NL representative in the FREMP, Brussels, Belgium
E-mail: martijn-de.grave@minbuza.nl

NORWAY / NORVEGE
Ms. Marthe Kristine FJELD, Adviser, Norwegian Ministry of Justice and Public Security, Legislation Department, Postboks 8005 Dep, NO-0030 Oslo
Tel.: +47 22 24 53 47
E-mail: marthe.fjeld@jd.dep.no

Ms Tonje MEINICH, (Chairperson/Présidente), European and International Affairs, Norwegian Ministry of Justice, P.O. Box 8005 Dep., 0030 Oslo
Tel: 00 47 22 24 53 81
E-mail: tonje.meinich@jd.dep.no

POLAND / POLOGNE
Ms Marta KACZMARSKA, Senior Expert, Department for the Proceedings before International Human Rights Protection Bodies, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Al. Szucha 23, 00-580 Warsaw
Tel.: +48 22 523 6588
E-mail: Marta.Kaczmarska@msz.gov.pl

Mrs Beata WŚCISŁY-BIAŁEK, chief expert/FRA National Liaison Officer, Department of European Policy, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Al. J. Ch. Szucha 23, 00-580 Warsaw
Tel.: +48 22 523 9143

PORTUGAL
Mr João ARSÉNIO DE OLIVEIRA, Head of Department, International Affairs Department, Ministry of Justice, Directorate General for Justice Policy, Av. D. João II, lote 1.08.01E, Torre H, pisos 2/3 - 1990-097 Lisboa
T: +351 217 924 030 ; F: +351 217 924 090
E-mail: joao.p.oliveira@dgpj.mj.pt

ROMANIA / ROUMANIE
Mme Aniela BALUT, Directrice, Direction du Droit Européenne, Ministère des Affaires Étrangères, Bucharest
E-mail: anieala.balut@mae.ro

RUSSIAN FEDERATION / FEDERATION DE RUSSIE
Mr Vasily NEBENZIA, Director of the Department of Humanitarian Cooperation and Human Rights, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, Moscow
E-Mail: nebenzia@hotmail.com

Mme Maria MOLOTOSOVA, 1st Secretary, Department for International Humanitarian Cooperation and Human Rights, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 32/34 Sennaya sq. 119200 Moscow
Tel.: 00 7 495 244 30 25
E-mail: m.molodtsova@mail.ru

Mme Diana ELOYEVA, Legal Department, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 32/34 Sennaya sq. 119200 Moscow
Tel. 00 7 499 241 77 18
E-mail: dp@mid.ru

Mr Vladislav ERMAKOV, Deputy to the Permanent Representative, Chancery, 75 allée de la Robertsau, 67000 Strasbourg
Tel: 00 33 3 88 24 20 15 - Fax: 00 33 3 88 24 19 74
E-mail: representationpermderrussie@wanadoo.fr
SERBIA / SERBIE
Mr Slavoljub CARIC, Government Agent, Ministry of Justice and Public Administration, Office of the Agent before the ECHR, Boul. Mihaola Pupina 2, 11000 Belgrade
Tel: 00 381 11 31 7074 - Fax: 00 381 11 311 73 56
E-mail: slavoljub.caric@mpravde.gov.rs

SLOVAK REPUBLIC / REPUBLIQUE SLOVAQUE
Mrs Jana VNUKOVA, Deputy Director General, Head of Foreign Relations and Human Rights, Department of International and European Law, Ministry of Justice, Župné Námestie 13, 813 11 Bratislava
Tel: +421 2 59 353 473 ; Fax: +421 2 59 353 605
E-mail: jana.vnukova@justice.sk

SLOVENIA/SLOVENIE
Ms Maja PETERNEL, Legal Adviser at the Permanent Representation of Slovenia to the European Union, rue du Commerce 44, 1000 Bruxelles, Belgique
Telephone: +32 499696761
E-mail: maja.peterenel@gov.si

SPAIN / ESPAGNE
Mr Francisco de ASIS SANZ GANDASEGUI, Abogado del Estado Jefe - Área de Derechos Humanos, Subdirección General de Constitucional y Derechos Humanos, Departamento de Const. y Derec. Humanos, Abogacía General del Estado, C/ San Bernado, 45, 28015 Madrid
Tel.: + 913904777 ; Fax: + 91 390 43 93
E-mail: f.sgandasegui@dsje.mju.es

SWEDEN / SUEDE
Ms Jessica SJÖSTRAND, Deputy Director for the Swedish Ministry for Foreign Affairs, Department for International Law, Human Rights and Treaty Law, 103 39 Stockholm
Tel.: +46 8 405 58 35
E-mail: jessica.sjostrand@foreign.ministry.se

MS Sara FINNIGAN, Deputy to the Permanent Representative, Swedish Chancery, 67, allée de la Robertsau, 67000 Strasbourg, France
Tel.: +33 3-88 24 60 56 and +33-6-70 13 26 62
E-mail: sara.finnigan@foreign.ministry.se

SWITZERLAND / SUISSE
Mr Frank SCHÜRMANN, Agent du Gouvernement, Chef de l’unité Droit européen et protection internationale des droits de l’homme, Office fédéral de la justice, Bundesrain 20, CH-3003 Berne
Tel: 00 41 31 322 41 50 - Fax: 00 41 31 322 84 01
E-mail: frank.schuermann@bj.admin.ch

M. Charles-Edouard HELD, Ambassadeur Extraordinaire et Plénipotentiaire, Représentant Permanent, Chancellerie, 23, rue Herder - 67083 Strasbourg Cedex, France
E-mail: vertretung-ER@stc.rep.admin.ch

Mr Daniel FRANK, Head Human Rights Section, Federal Department of Foreign Affairs, Federal Palace North, 3003 Berne
Tel: 0041 31 323 37 63 – Fax: 0041 31 322 37 79
E-mail: daniel.frank@eda.admin.ch

Mme Silvia GASTALDI, Office fédéral de la justice, Bundesrain 20, 3003 Berne
Tel. : 00 41 31 325 4065 – Fax 0041 31 322 8401
e-mail : silvia.gastaldi@bj.admin.ch
“THE FORMER YUGOSLAV REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA” / “L’EX-RÉPUBLIQUE YOUGOSLAVE DE MACÉDOINE”
Ms Olgica VASILEVSKA, Head of the CoE Department, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Skopje
E-mail: Olgica.Vasilevska@mfa.gov.mk

TURKEY / TURQUIE
Mme Halime Ebru DEMIRCAN, Adjointe au Représentant permanent de la Turquie auprès du Conseil de l’Europe, 23, boulevard de l’Orangerie, F-67000 Strasbourg
Tel: 00 33 3 88 36 50 94 - Fax: 00 33 3 88 24 03 73
E-mail: hedemircan@mfa.gov.tr

Mr Mehmet ÖNCÜ, Counsellor, Représentation permanente de la Turquie auprès du Conseil de l’Europe, 23, boulevard de l’Orangerie, F-67000 Strasbourg
Tel: 00 33 3 88 36 50 94 - Fax: 00 33 3 88 24 03 73
E-mail: mehmet.oncu@gmail.com

UKRAINE
Mr Yevgen PERELYGIN, Director, Bureau for European Integration, Secretariat of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 1 Mykhaylivska square, Kiev
Tel: 00 38 044 256 63 10
E-mail: perelygin@apu.gov.ua

UNITED KINGDOM / ROYAUME-UNI
Mr Rob LINHAM, Head of Council of Europe Human Rights Policy, Justice Policy Group, Ministry of Justice, 102 Petty France, London, SW1H 9AJ
Tel. +44 20 3334 3851 - Fax +44 20 3334 5518 - GSM +44 75000 87700
E-mail: rob.linham@justice.gsi.gov.uk

Ms Abigail CULANK, Head of European Union Human Rights Policy, Ministry of Justice, 102 Petty France, London, SW1H 9AJ
Tel: +44 20 3334 4735 - Fax: +44 20 3334 5518
E-mail: abigail.culank@justice.gsi.gov.uk

EUROPEAN UNION/UNION EUROPEENNE
Ms Luisella PAVAN-WOOLFE, Ambassador, Head of the Delegation of the European Union to the Council of Europe, 18 Boulevard de l’Orangerie, 67000 Strasbourg
Tél: +33 3 90 40 60 80
E-mail: Luisella.Pavan-Woolfe@eeas.europa.eu

Mr Hannes KRAEMER, Member of the Legal Service of the European Commission, Brussels
Tel.: +32 2 295 06 86
E-mail: Hannes.KRAEMER@ec.europa.eu

Mme Eglantine CUJO, Membre du Service juridique de la Commission européenne, Bruxelles
E-mail: Eglantine.CUJO@ec.europa.eu

Mr Loránt HAVAS, Legal Advisor, legal Affairs Division, European External Action Service, 1046 Brussels
Tél.: + 32 2 299 53 73
E-Mail: lorant.havas@eeas.europa.eu

M. Jerome LEGRAND, Administrateur, EEAS, Bruxelles
e-mail: jerome.legrand@eeas.europa.eu

Tel: +32 2 281 8902
E-mail: kristi.raba@consilium.europa.eu

Mr. Giovanni Carlo BRUNO Delegation of the European Union to the Council of Europe, 18 Boulevard de l’Orangerie, 67000 Strasbourg
E-mail: Giovanni-Carlo.BRUNO@eeas.europa.eu@eeas.europa.eu

Mme Anna Katarzyna KOBUS, Stagiaire, Legal Service of the European Commission, Brussels
E-mail: Anna-Katarzyna.KOBUS@ec.europa.eu

OBSERVERS / OBSERVATEURS

REGISTRY OF THE EUROPEAN COURT OF HUMAN RIGHTS / GREFFE DE LA COUR EUROPEENNE DES DROITS DE L’HOMME
M. Johan CALLEWAERT, Greffier Adjoint de la Grande Chambre / Deputy Grand Chamber Registrar
Tel.: +33 3 88 41 24 00
e-mail: Johan.Callewaert@echr.coe.int

COMMITTEE OF LEGAL ADVISERS ON PUBLIC INTERNATIONAL LAW (CAHDI) / COMITÉ DES CONSEILLERS JURIDIQUES SUR LE DROIT INTERNATIONAL PUBLIC (CAHDI)
Mr Erik WENNERSTRÖM, Generaldirektör/Director-General, Brottsförebyggande rådet/National Council for Crime Prevention, Box 1386, 111 93 Stockholm, Sweden
Tel: +46 (0)8-401 87 01
E-mail: erik.wennerstrom@bra.se

SECRETARIAT

DG I – Human Rights and Rule of Law / Droits de l’Homme et État de droit
Council of Europe / Conseil de l'Europe, F-67075 Strasbourg Cedex

M. Philippe BOILLAT, Director General / Directeur Général, Directorate General of Human Rights and Rule of Law / Direction Générale droits de l’Homme et Etat de droit
Tel: 00 33 3 88 41 34 10
E-mail: philippe.boillat@coe.int

M. Christos GIAKOU MOPOULOS, Director/Directeur, Directorate of Human Rights/ Direction des Droits de l’Homme
Tel. : 00 33 3 88 41 23 75
E-mail : christos.giakoumopoulos@coe.int

Mr Jörg POLAKIEWICZ, Head of Department / Chef de Service, Human Rights Policy and Development Department / Service des politiques et du développement des droits de l’Homme
Tel: 00 33 3 88 41 29 19
E-mail: jorg.polakiewicz@coe.int

Mr Daniele CANGEMI, Head of Division / Chef de Division, Human Rights Law and Policy Division / Division du droit et de la politique des droits de l’Homme
Tel: 00 33 3 88 41 22 24
E-mail: nicola-daniel.cangemi@coe.int

Mr Fredrik SUNDBERG, Adjoint à la Chef du Service de l’Exécution des Arrêts de la Cour / Deputy to the Head of Department for the Execution of the Judgments of the Court
Tel.: +33 (0)3 88 41 28 07
E-mail: Fredrik.SUNDBERG@coe.int
Mr Matthias KLOTH, Administrator, Human Rights Law and Policy Division / Division du droit et de la politique des droits de l’Homme
Tel: 00 33 3 90 21 49 84
E-mail: matthias.kloth@coe.int

Mme Valérie PEARD, Principal Assistant, Human Rights Law and Policy Division / Division du droit et de la politique des droits de l’homme
Tel. : +33 3 88 41 31 58
E-mail: valerie.peard@coe.int

Mme Frédérique BONIFAIX, Assistant / Assistante, Human Rights Law and Policy Division / Division du droit et de la politique des droits de l’Homme
Tel: 00 33 3 88 41 20 05 - Fax: 00 33 3 88 41 37 45
E-mail: frederique.bonifaix@coe.int

Committee of Ministers / Comité des Ministres

Ms Ulrika FLOODIN-JANSON, Principal Administrator (Human Rights and Legal Co-operation), Secretariat of the Committee of Ministers.
Tel.: + 33 (0) 3 88 41 23 35
E-mail: Ulrika.FLOODIN-JANSON@coe.int

Ms Christiane FURST, Trainee/stagiaire,
E-mail: christiane.furst@coe.int

DLAPIL - Direction du Conseil Juridique et du droit international public/Directorate of Legal Advice and Public International Law

Mme Elise CORNU, Legal Advisor, Directorate of Legal Advice and Public International Law
Tel.: + 33 3 88 41 23 18
e-mail: elise.cornu@coe.int

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INTERPRETERS / INTERPRÈTES
Chef d’équipe : Corinne McGEORGE
Didier JUNGLING
Isabelle MARCHINI
APPENDIX II

Agenda

1. Opening of the meeting and adoption of the agenda

2. Draft legal instruments on the accession of the European Union to the European Convention on Human Rights: examination of proposals for amendments

Working documents

| Chairperson’s proposal on outstanding issues | 47+1(2013)001 |
| Common paper of Andorra, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Georgia, Iceland, Liechtenstein, Republic of Moldova, Monaco, Montenegro, Norway, Serbia, Switzerland, Russian Federation, Turkey and Ukraine on major concerns regarding the Draft revised Agreement on the Accession of the European Union to the European Convention on Human Rights | 47+1(2013)003 |
| CDDH report to the Committee of Ministers on the elaboration of legal instruments for the accession of the European Union to the European Convention on Human Rights | CDDH(2011)009 |
| Negotiation document submitted by the European Union on 30 October 2012 | (Restricted) |
| Negotiation document submitted by the European Union on 14 June 2012 | (Restricted) |
| Comments from Armenia | 47+1(2012)003 bil (Restricted) |
| Comments from Norway | 47+1(2012)004 bil (Restricted) |
| Comments from Switzerland | 47+1(2012)005 bil (Restricted) |
| Letter from the Russian Federation | 47+1(2012)006 bil (Restricted) |

Reference documents

| Decisions of the 1145th meeting of the Ministers' Deputies (13 June 2012) | 47+1(2012)001 |
3. Any other business
APPENDIX III

Common paper of Andorra, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Georgia, Iceland, Liechtenstein, Moldova, Monaco, Montenegro, Norway, Serbia, Switzerland, Russian Federation, Turkey and Ukraine on major concerns regarding the Draft revised Agreement on the Accession of the European Union to the European Convention on Human Rights

21.01.2013

I. Introduction

1. After the third negotiation meeting of CDDH+1, two informal meetings of States which are not members of the EU have taken place in Strasbourg, with a view to discussing issues of common concern related to the Draft Accession Agreement.

2. The present paper dresses the list of these issues and presents some alternative proposals. For reasons of timing, the proposal of the Chair could not have been taken into consideration. In this sense, it should not be seen as a counter-proposal to the latter.

Even if this paper is put forward jointly, individual member states continue to voice their particular positions and nuanced concerns on different issues raised. In hope of advancing the negotiation process, however, and in the constructive spirit of clarity on some major points, this paper has been put together.

3. In the view of the non-EU member States listed in the title of this common paper (in the following: NEUMS), most legal issues that have been identified as controversial in the negotiation process can be resolved in a constructive spirit and given a common understanding on the purpose of the accession.

II. General remarks

4. The NEUMS welcome the intention of the EU to become a party to the Convention. Accession will close gaps in human rights protection by guaranteeing that any person, non-governmental organisation or group of individuals claiming to be a victim of a violation of the ECHR by an institution or body of the EU can bring a complaint against the EU before the Strasbourg Court under the same conditions as those applying for complaints brought against member States. Accession will also enable the EU to defend itself directly before the Strasbourg Court in matters where EU law or actions of the EU have been impugned. In addition, it will reduce the risk of divergence and ensure consistency between human rights case law of the Strasbourg and Luxembourg Courts.

5. On the other hand, the final legal instruments for the accession must ensure a just, reasonable and practical system which takes into account the specific nature of the EU, and at the same time preserves the nature, the integrity and the effectiveness of the Convention and respects the values and traditions of the Council of Europe.

6. To reach these aims, the following principles should be respected:

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2 Version as it stands after the Third negotiation meeting, Doc. 47+1 (2012)R03, Appendix III ("Conclusions presented by the Chair"). Text distributed in English only.
The amendments to the ECHR and the adaptations of the system as a whole should be limited to what is strictly necessary for the purpose of the accession;
Accession should, to the largest possible extent, be based on the principle of equal footing between the EU and the 47 HCP, with due respect to its special status as a non-state actor. Derogations to this principle should only be admitted on an exceptional basis and should not be inconsistent with the aims of the accession;
Differences between States which are members of the EU and States which are not members of the EU should be avoided.

III. Article 1 Scope of accession and amendments to Article 59

1. Art. 1 para. 2, lit. c ("actors")

7. The text should explicitly state that "actors" whose actions, measures or omissions can be attributable to the EU include persons.

2. Art. 1 para 2, lit. c1. aa) ("attributability")

8. The NEUMS take note of the amendments made by the EU to its proposal concerning the introduction of a new subparagraph aa). The placement and the exact wording of this provision need further discussion.

3. Art. 1 para 2, lit. c1. bb) (exclusion of CFSP)

9. The proposed exclusion of CFSP causes major concern for different reasons (political sensitivity; restriction of the jurisdiction of the Strasbourg Court) and should be deleted.

4. Art. 1 para 3, first indent (list of Protocols)

10. The Draft does not mention any more Art. 2 of Protocol 4 (which the EU does not intend to ratify for the time being) and Art. 2 of Protocol 6 (partial application of the Protocol). This raises questions and concerns which need to be discussed.

IV. Art. 3 Co-respondent mechanism (CRM)

In relation to the positions presented in this chapter, Norway does not make up a part of the NEUMS.

1. Art. 3 § 2 (extension of CRM)

11. The NEUMS, with the exception of Iceland, opt for a solution ensuring that the EU can (or must, if the CRM is binding; see below, point 12) become a co-respondent not only when an application is directed against an EU member State but also when it is directed against a State which is not member of the EU, and the application raises questions of compatibility with the Convention of an international agreement between that State and the EU. In these cases, there is an interest of that State to see the EU participating in the procedure and, if appropriate, in the execution of the judgement of the Court.
2. **Art. 3 § 5 (non binding character of CRM)**

12. The NEUMS point out that, given the main purpose of accession, it would be consequent to make the CRM binding in the sense that the EU and its member States have to accept the invitation of the Court. A optional character of the CRM might lead to gaps in participation and, consequently, to lack of accountability and enforceability in the ECHR system.

3. **Art. 3 § 6 (prior involvement)**

13. The NEUMS affirm that the prior involvement of the Luxembourg Court is not consistent with the principle of subsidiarity, that the procedure would constitute a privilege for one Contracting Party and that the impact on the Strasbourg Court of the assessment made by the Luxembourg Court should not be underestimated. The subsidiary nature of the supervisory mechanism established by the ECHR requires that any person with a claim that their rights and freedoms as set forth in the ECHR have been violated, has available an effective remedy before a domestic authority providing adequate redress, where appropriate.

14. The issue needs further consideration and should be seen in the wider context of derogations from the principle of equal footing.

4. **Art. 3 § 7 (responsibility)**

15. Regarding the question of joint responsibility, the NEUMS welcome the compromise solution presented in the last meeting of the CDDH-UE 47+1, in the sense that a joint request for single responsibility is not sufficient to bind the Court. On the other hand, the Court is not authorized to hold only one party responsible if there is no joint request. The NEUMS are of the opinion that in judicial proceedings, a tribunal can in no circumstances be bound by the conclusions presented by one or several parties. In this sense, the proposal appears to be inconsistent with the ECHR system: the Court should decide on its own whether to hold the EU liable as a co-respondent and the latter should comply with the ruling.

V. **Art. 7 Participation of EU in the CM**

1. **Art. 7 § 1 (scope of EU participation)**

16. The current practice within the Council of Europe has been to grant voting rights in the Committee of Ministers to member states only. In the absence of a clear change of position within the Council of Europe, it would not be advisable to depart from this practice.

17. Therefore, the NEUMS see merits in the proposal to restrict the participation of the EU in the Committee of Ministers related to the functions which the Convention explicitly attributes to the latter, and consequently to delete the remainder of paragraph 1 of Article 7 which refers to the participation in Committee of Ministers’ statutory functions. Participation of the EU in the decision-making process should be assured otherwise, in order to preserve the nature and composition of the Committee of Ministers as provided for under the Statute of the Council of Europe.

18. The question raised is one of principle and should be solved within a wider context than the accession negotiations. A suitable arena for such a task could be the on-going review of the functioning of the Conventions, which includes an assessment of the rights of parties which are not
members of the Council of Europe. A decision on the solution chosen for the accession agreement should not create a new precedent and thereby prejudge the wider on-going review process.

2. **Art. 7 § 2 a) (obligation to coordinate)**

2.1 **Text itself**

19. The NEUMS prefer to keep the text in paragraph 2 letter a stating the obligation of the EU and its member States to express their positions and vote in a coordinated manner. Although it is merely declaratory, the sentence is of importance because it explains the need for a specialised regulation on voting where the EU is involved.

2.2 **Rules on voting rights in cases involving EU: substance**

20. In the view of the NEUMS, it would be appropriate to limit the adoption of special rules to very specific situations in which the EU would be most likely obliged to coordinate its position with that of its member States. In addition, appropriate guarantees are required to ensure that the combined votes of the EU and its member States will not prejudice the effective exercise by the Committee of Ministers of its supervisory functions under Articles 39 and 46 of the ECHR.

21. Regarding the majority required for adopting final resolutions, the NEUMS see some merits in the rule of a majority of 4/5 of all the HCP. This solution avoids the difficulty related to an adjustment clause.

22. As for the solution for decisions other than those relating to final resolutions, the panel solution proposed by the EU is not ideal and should preferably be rejected in its entirety.

2.3 **Rules on voting rights in cases involving EU: placement**

23. The NEUMS reiterate their hesitation towards the use of a gentleman’s agreement. The voting rules are of such principal importance that they should be placed in a legally binding instrument.

3. **Art. 7 § 2 b) and c) (lack of equal footing in cases not involving EU)**

24. The NEUMS, with the exception of Norway, have doubts about the solution regarding the participation of the EU in the supervision of the fulfilment of obligations by the Contracting Parties, other than the EU. The proposed solution would give rise to differences in the supervision of the fulfilment of obligations by a Member State of the EU, on the one hand, and by a State which is not a member of the EU, on the other. In order to avoid such unequal treatment, the formulation should be amended so that the EU cannot express a position or exercise its right to vote where the Committee of Ministers supervises the fulfilment of obligations by other Contracting Parties.
Accession Agreement (General Attribution Clause):

For the purposes of the Convention, of the Protocols thereto and of this Agreement, an act, measure or omission of organs or agents of a member State of the European Union shall be attributable only to that State, even if such act, measure or omission occurs when the State implements the law of the European Union, including Council decisions taken under the Treaty on the European Union; this shall not preclude the European Union from being responsible as a co-respondent for a violation resulting from such an act, measure or omission, in accordance with Article 3 (2), (4) (5) and (7) of this Agreement.

Explanatory report:

Under EU law the acts of Member States implementing EU law and Council decisions under the TEU are attributable to Member States. For the sake of consistency, parallel rules should apply for the purposes of the Convention system. It should be recalled that the approach followed by the Court as regards the attributability of a certain action to either a Contracting Party or an international organisation under the umbrella of which that action was taken, has consistently been to have regard to the particular facts of each case, and in particular to the applicable legal basis. It is expected that the Court would follow the same approach also in respect of the EU, after its accession, including with regard to matters related to the EU common foreign and security policy. In fact, in none of the cases in which the Court has decided on the attribution of extra-territorial acts or measures by Contracting Parties operating in the framework of an international organisation (see inter alia Behrami and Saramati, para. 122; Al-Jedda, para. 76) there was a specific rule on attribution, for the purposes of the Convention, of such acts or measures to either the international organisation concerned or its members. Conversely, acts, measures and omissions of the EU institutions, bodies, offices or agencies, or of persons acting on their behalf are attributable to the EU in whichever context they occur, including with regard to matters related to the EU common foreign and security policy.\(^3\)

\(^{3}\) Examples could be provided if necessary