

International workshop
“Protection of Human Rights Defenders: good practices and the role of Italy”
(Rome, MFA, 18 June 2018)

DRAFT PROGRAMME

9.30: Registration of participants

10.00-11.00: Opening remarks

- “Introduction – the role of Italy in the protection of Human Rights Defenders and the 2018 OSCE Chairmanship-in-Office” – Italian MFA (TBD)
- “OSCE and HRDs protection” - Ingibjörg Sólrún Gísladóttir, Director, OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR)
- Video-message “UN and HRDs protection” - Michel Forst, UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of Human Rights Defenders

11.00-12.30: The OSCE and EU guidelines for the protection of Human Rights Defenders: opportunities and ways of implementation

- “OSCE Guidelines for the protection of HRDs. Challenges and opportunities after the first 2014-2016 evaluation” - Omer Fisher, OSCE/ODIHR, Head, Human Rights Department
- “EU guidelines for the protection of Human Rights Defenders” - Nieves Coteró, European External Action Service (EEAS)
- Key recommendations from civil society organisations:
 - Euro-Mediterranean Foundation of Support to Human Rights Defenders (EMHRF) - Anne-Sophie Schaeffer
 - Civic Solidarity Platform - Kostantin Baranov

12.30-14.00: Lunch Break

14.00-15.30: A look at “best practices” for HRDs protection

- Presentation by Tommaso Mignani, Protect Defenders EU, Brussels
- Presentation by Hannah Dwyer Smith, University of York
- Presentation by Liliana De Marco Coenen, Protection International, Brussels
- Presentation by Sebastiaan Van Der Zwaan, Shelter Cities, Justice and Peace, Netherlands
- Q&A

15.30-17.30: Roundtable “The role of Italy”

In Difesa Di; MFA/DG Political Affairs & Security; MFA/DG Development Cooperation (tbc); MFA/DG Italian Citizens Abroad & Migration Policies; Italian Inter-ministerial Committee for Human Rights/CIDU; Frontline Defenders (Emma Achilli); National Association of Italian Municipalities/ANCI; Autonomous Province of Trento

Background

It seems timely in 2018 for Italy and the international community to take a look at the protection of Human Rights Defenders worldwide. Recent data published by international NGOs show a constant rise in the cases of killings, threats against and the persecution of Human Rights Defenders, and further substantiate the need to step up commitments to implement the UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders fully and effectively. 2018 also happens to mark the 20th anniversary of the adoption of the Declaration, which will be celebrated with various initiatives and events all over the world. In 2018, Italy will also chair the OSCE, an institution that has launched a programme for the protection of Human Rights Defenders and has adopted a set of guidelines that apply to participating States' diplomatic corps. As regards EU member States, Italy included, these OSCE guidelines complement those drawn up and adopted by the European Union for its own missions abroad and those of its Member States. Moreover, the European Union launched an Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy in July 2015 to support further the implementation of the guidelines with specific actions on HRDs.

The current global situation, an urgency dictated by the dramatic shrinking of civic spaces in various parts of the world, and the strong interest of the Italian Parliament and Italian civil society all point towards Italy using 2018 to take its place at the vanguard of Human Rights Defenders protection. The Italian Chamber of Deputies adopted a resolution on the matter in early 2017, while the Human Rights Committee of the Italian Senate held a series of hearings, including one with the UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of Human Rights Defenders, Michel Forst. Since then, the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation has engaged in a constructive dialogue with the Italian civil society network 'In Difesa Di', composed of 30 NGOs and organisations concerned with human rights, the environment, international solidarity and the rule of law (www.indifesadi.org). One of the proposals that came out of these discussions was an international workshop on best practices for the protection of HRDs and the role of Italy. Meanwhile, the Autonomous Province of Trento has adopted a resolution for the creation of a protection ("shelter") programme for Human Rights Defenders at risk, the first of its kind in Italy, leading administrations elsewhere to express an interest in doing likewise.

The workshop will therefore offer an unprecedented opportunity for a constructive dialogue with selected representatives of Ministries of Foreign Affairs, EU and OSCE protection programmes, civil society organisations and other institutions active in this field.

GOALS

The workshop aims to:

- a. Consolidate knowledge of the issues related to the protection of Human Rights Defenders, including by means of identifying opportunities and needs based on the direct exchange of experiences in HRD protection;
- b. Analyse the various tools envisaged by the relevant OSCE and EU guidelines, including ways to implement;
- c. Analyse good practices from other countries and make proposals to improve the coordination among OSCE and EU member states in activities related to Human Rights Defenders, with a focus on Italy's possible role.