Mr. Chair,

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

The Candidate Countries the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia*, Montenegro*, Serbia* and Albania*, the country of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidate Bosnia and Herzegovina, as well as Ukraine, and Georgia, align themselves with this statement.

The European Union would like to thank the President of the Human Rights Council, Ambassador Baudelaire Ndong Ella, for presenting the Council’s ninth annual report to the UN General Assembly. We also appreciate the opportunity to hold an interactive dialogue with the Human Rights Council President at the Third Committee.

The European Union remains a strong supporter of the Human Rights Council, a position held since its establishment. The Council, as the main UN human rights body, purely devoted

* The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Albania continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.
to the promotion and protection of all human rights, has strengthened the ability of the UN to ensure that all persons enjoy their human rights. We attach great importance to both the credibility and effectiveness of the Council, and will continue to make every effort to ensure that it is able to address situations of violations of human rights, including gross and systematic violations, respond promptly to human rights emergencies, but also to improve human rights standards and their implementation worldwide through systematic work on various thematic issues. In this context, we strongly oppose any attempts to undermine the institutional position of the Council within the UN system.

In view of this, the European Union is pleased to note that the Council has maintained its leadership in addressing human rights situations. The Council’s ongoing response to the crisis in the Syrian Arab Republic remains highly important, including extending, through to the twenty-eighth session of the Human Rights Council, the mandate of the Commission of Inquiry, currently the only international investigative mechanism on human rights violations and abuses in the country. The Council has also demonstrated its commitment to provide technical assistance and capacity building to the governments of Afghanistan, Cambodia, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Haiti, Mali, Somalia, Sudan and Yemen to promote human rights, and we welcome the continued support that has been rendered to Central African Republic, Cote d'Ivoire, Libya, Republic of Guinea, and South Sudan. The EU hopes that the Council will continue to closely monitor situations where technical assistance and capacity building can make a difference and take action where necessary.

Mr President,

On 21 October, the General Assembly elected 15 new members of the Council. Serving as a Council member entails important responsibilities - resolution 60/251 provides that: “members elected to the Council shall uphold the highest standards in the promotion and protection of human rights”. We encourage all to pay full attention to the human rights records and human rights commitments of States throughout their membership.

The EU highly values the work of the special procedures and is firmly convinced that they play a crucial role in advancing the human rights agenda. All EU Member States have extended a standing invitation to the special procedures and the EU calls upon all UN members to do likewise and to actively cooperate with them. In order to allow Special Procedures to fully carry out their mandates, it is crucial that they are able to independently assess and draw the Council’s attention to human rights issues and situations. The EU welcomes the growing participation of mandate holders in the Council.
Given the situation in the countries concerned, the EU welcomes the extensions of the country specific mandates of the Special Rapporteurs on the situation of human rights in Belarus, Eritrea, Myanmar, Iran, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, and in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, as well as the appointment of the Independent Expert on the situation of human rights in Somalia. We also welcome the establishment of the new mandate of the Independent Expert on capacity-building and technical cooperation in the field of human rights in Cote d'Ivoire, and the extension of the mandate of the Independent Expert on the situation of human rights in Central African Republic, Haiti, Mali and Sudan. We also support the establishment of the commission of inquiry on the Situation of human rights in Eritrea and stand fully behind the OHCHR Sri Lanka investigation currently underway. Finally, we also encourage cooperation with the commission of inquiry set to investigate all violations and abuses of international humanitarian law and human rights law in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem.

Thematic Special Procedures play an equally important role, through their research, country specific visits and valuable contribution to the better understanding of the content of specific human rights and their contribution to the enhancement and realisation of human rights standards. Amongst the many thematic Special Procedures, the EU would like to highlight the mandate of the Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief, who plays an active role in identifying existing and emerging obstacles to the enjoyment of the right to freedom of religion or belief and presenting recommendations to overcome such obstacles.

Mr President,

The European Union remains strongly committed to the Universal Periodic Review (UPR), a truly universal and unique mechanism within the UN, addressing all human rights and applicable to all UN Member States without distinction or discrimination, and which continues to serve as a contribution to the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms on the ground. Preserving the universality of the Universal Periodic Review process is of paramount importance and in this regard the Council has been successful.

Ultimately the quality of the review recommendations and the commitment to implement them are key for the outcome of this process. Therefore, we would like to refer to the Council’s President letter of 18 September 2013 by stressing that equal treatment of all countries is an underlying element of the UPR mechanism, and needs to be maintained throughout each cycle.
The EU wishes in particular to highlight and welcome the following important developments during the reporting period:

Firstly, the Council rendered necessary attention to the safety of journalists, holding a Panel discussion on the subject,

Secondly, enjoyment of human rights by women and girls continued to figure as a major theme at the Human Rights Council agenda during the period under review. The Council held yet again a panel discussion on preventing and eliminating child, early and forced marriage, as well as on the identification of good practices in combatting female genital mutilation.

Thirdly, the Council addressed the issue of the death penalty through a High-level panel discussion as well as resolution initiatives.

Fourthly, the Council continued its crucial work on the rights of the child, with a full-day annual panel discussion and a resolution, presented jointly by the European Union and GRULAC, dedicated to access to justice for children,

Fifthly, the Council also held a Panel discussion on the importance of the promotion and protection of civil society space, focusing on the promotion of a constructive interactive partnership between States and civil society, and underlining the important role of civil society, including human right defenders, in promotion and protection of human rights.

Mr President,

The EU reiterates its strongest condemnation of acts of reprisals and intimidation of civil society representatives attending the Human Rights Council and cooperating with human rights mechanisms and the OHCHR. Contributions by civil society organizations and national human rights institutions are extremely valuable to the work of the Council. Their possibility to interact with the Council must be preserved.

In conclusion, let me reiterate our ongoing commitment to contribute to the work of the Human Rights Council and to further strengthen its role in the development of international human rights law. We will continue to systematically uphold and ensure implementation of
existing international norms and standards, to strongly advocate for the universality of human rights and to promote the observance by all States of all human rights and fundamental freedoms.

Thank you, Mr President.