

Brussels, 22 MARS 2018
A(2018) 318785-382700

Ms Ana Maria Gomes MEP
European Parliament
1040 Brussels

Dear Ana,

I would hereby like to thank you for your letter regarding the Ethiopian Satellite Television's (ESAT) satellite broadcasts.

I fully share your views on the importance of safeguarding independent media in Ethiopia. In this context, in the Spokesperson statement issued on 18 January 2018 on the release from prison of political leaders and activists, and on the decision to close the Maekelawi detention centre, we underscored that *"freedom of expression and right to assembly are crucial components of a democratic society"*.

As you know, we regularly engage with the Ethiopian Government to discuss the political situation. I personally raised on several occasions our concerns on violations of human rights and fundamental freedoms in Ethiopia with both, the Prime Minister, and the Minister for Foreign Affairs. During my last visit to Addis, I held discussions with the political opposition and with civil society to gather a better understanding of the situation and reassure them on our engagement in this regard.

Throughout 2017, the EU continued giving its support to independent media and to civil society in Ethiopia through the Civil Society Fund (CSF) and the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR). This year, together with our Member States, we will particularly engage in promoting the recognition of the positive role of civil society and media in the Ethiopian society, as well as widening the space for more independent and professional media.

In light of the information in our possession, the difficulties experienced by ESAT do not appear to indicate a potential violation of EU rules, but relate to assessments made by private companies. Please rest assured that we will continue to support independent media both inside and outside Ethiopia.

Yours sincerely,



Federica Mogherini