

Ana Gomes (S&D). - Madam President, I welcome the High Representative's initiative of launching an interinstitutional debate to ensure that an effective and comprehensive strategy for promoting human rights and democracy is at the core of the EU's external policy. However, I agree with my colleague, Sarah Ludford, who says that the EU is not going to be seen as credible as a human rights promoter if it continues ducking the serious responsibilities of Member States that collaborated in human rights violations under the guise of the war on terror.

I believe that a country-by-country strategy on human rights that takes into account specificities and priorities along with dramatic campaigns, such as women's rights, and related governance and rule-of-law questions, such as the fight against corruption, should enable EU foreign policy to improve coherence and achieve concrete results. Benchmarking can be a useful tool for us to reward a genuine willingness to protect human rights and dramatic practices and, through our trade and development policies, to put those who continue to resort to repressive policies at a disadvantage. Take Ethiopia, the second most populous country in Africa, which is massively financed by EU aid and is an outrageous example of our inconsistency, where we turn our blind eye to the blatant human rights' violations.

I believe Parliament and civil society must participate in the elaboration of such country-based strategies and in the monitoring of their implementation. High Representative, in your visits, you should make a point of always meeting human rights' defenders, particularly of women's rights, and ensure that human rights are a mandatory topic for EU delegations and all in the European External Action Service. I also welcome your idea of appointing special representatives on human rights, international justice and international humanitarian law.