

Brussels, 17 NOV. 2017  
A(2017)4863877-5633017

To all MEP signatories of the letter dated 4 October regarding caste-based discrimination in view of upcoming EU-India Summit

*Dear Colleagues,*

I would herby like to thank you for your letter of 4 October addressed to President of the European Council, Donald Tusk, President of the European Commission, Jean-Claude Juncker, and me as regards the caste and human rights issues in India to be addressed on the occasion of the EU – India Summit, which took place in New Delhi on 6 October 2017. The Presidents have asked me to equally reply on their behalf.

The promotion and protection of human rights form an important part of the EU's relationship with all its major partners, including India. At the EU – India Summit on 6 October 2017, Presidents Tusk and Juncker indeed discussed human rights with Prime Minister Modi, and they looked forward to the next EU - India Human Rights Dialogue as a key tool to promote shared human rights values and forge mutual understanding within the Strategic Partnership. They also agreed to enhance human rights cooperation in international fora, in particular in the UN General Assembly and the UN Human Rights Council.

Non-discrimination, with a particular focus in India on caste-based discrimination, is a cross-cutting issue in most EU funded projects. Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and Minorities were the main target of the EU Sector Policy Support "Programme for universalization of elementary education" and the "Programme for universalization of secondary education". The EU contribution to these programmes for the period 2007-2017 was 146.7 million Euros. In addition to education, a number of projects have addressed the need for rights awareness, including land rights as well as access to justice. Since 2014, the European Union has committed €6.5 million through the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights to activities implemented in India, including the promotion of equality, non-discrimination and inclusion, partnering with national and international Non-Governmental Organisations.

Within the UN, the EU continues to pay close attention to deliberations dedicated to caste-based discriminations. This primarily takes place in the context of the fight for the elimination of racial discrimination both at the Human Rights Council and the 3rd Committee of the UN General Assembly. EU Member States also contribute to the debate on caste-based discrimination in the UN Universal Periodic Review process regarding India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Nepal and Bangladesh.

I would like to assure you that the EU will continue to raise human rights, including caste issues both in the bilateral political dialogue and in the international framework.

Yours sincerely,



Federica Mogherini