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## **HUMAN RIGHTS: THE STATE OF HUMAN RIGHTS IN EUROPE ON AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL'S 50th ANNIVERSARY**

Celebrating Amnesty International's 50th anniversary with a debate and exhibition of posters in the European Parliament in Brussels, Jerzy Buzek, President of the European Parliament, Edward McMillan-Scott, Vice President responsible for democracy and human rights, Heidi Hautala, Chair of the Subcommittee on Human Rights, Salil Shetty, Secretary General, Amnesty International and Nicolas Beger, Director, EU Institutions, Amnesty International, today praised the progress that human rights has made in the world over the last 50 years, but warned that injustices remain and the EU must work to make the Universal Declaration of Human Rights a living reality for all.

President Buzek, who opened the debate "Rising to the challenge: Europe as a champion of human rights", said: "The world may be more free, but injustice still happens and we can never remain silent. Our outreach is global, but these values are universal. This is why the European Parliament has called for Human Rights focal points in every EU Delegation. And has asked the External Action Service to match the professionalism of a top class diplomatic service with similar enthusiasm in working for human rights."

Vice President McMillan-Scott said: "With the adoption of the Treaty of Lisbon in 2009, the EU gained new scope to promote human rights outside the EU plus increased protection and a dedicated commissioner on fundamental freedoms within the EU. Human rights and democracy should be placed at the heart of EU foreign policy as Catherine Ashton keeps promising."

Ms Hautala said: "I would particularly like to thank Amnesty International for their uncompromising work to abolish double standards in the human rights policy, whether it's about different interests to protect the human rights in the EU and the rest of the world, or treating other countries with different criteria according to their strategic importance. The information produced by Amnesty International is reliable and is a great help in the work of the Human Rights Subcommittee in the European Parliament."

Mr Shetty said: "Today we're witnessing people power at its most inspiring in the Middle East and North Africa. The demand to live in dignity and freedom is proof that individual people acting together can end repression and corruption. The EU and its member states must do all they can to give tangible support to these demonstrations of popular will."

Mr Beger said: "The European institutions and EU member states must behave as genuine champions of human rights and not believe they can merely utter fine words and grandstand as brave defenders of justice. One topical example of this clash between rhetoric and action is the outrageous response by EU countries to the refugee crisis in North Africa. EU countries are faced with about 30,000 highly vulnerable migrants and are busy passing the buck and threatening free movement, one of Europe's greatest achievements."

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