



Member of the European Parliament

Brussels, 1 December 2010

**RE: EU-India Summit**

*Dear President of the European Council Herman Van Rompuy, President of the European Commission José Manuel Barroso, High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Catherine Ashton,*

We welcome the opportunity provided by the forthcoming EU-India Summit to strengthen further the relationship between the EU and India, which is characterised by close partnership, based on shared values and shared strategic priorities.

We look forward to a reaffirmation of this partnership, and of our mutual expectations of further progress to promote global stability, human development and human rights.

In this regard, we are writing specifically to urge that the issue of protecting minority rights should feature specifically on the agenda of the EU-India Summit. The experience of minorities is often a test of the enjoyment of human rights throughout a society. Sadly, in India, there continue to be deep inequalities in access to education, wealth and justice, with disenfranchised caste groups and religious minorities experiencing the worst treatment.

Firstly, the circumstances of India's 167 million Dalits continue to give grave cause for concern. Although it is important not to make generalisations about such a vast group of people, equivalent to the combined populations of the United Kingdom, France and Spain, the fact remains that Dalits suffer grievous social exclusion on the basis of their caste, and are the worst victims of virtually all human rights abuses across India. The Indian Government should be encouraged to implement the recommendations made by the UN Committee for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination in May 2007 and the Universal Periodic Review of India in May 2008.

Secondly, the EU was deeply concerned by the anti-Muslim violence which occurred in Gujarat in 2002 and by anti-Christian violence in Orissa and Karnataka in 2008. These were high-profile instances of wider patterns of violence and discrimination against these minority communities. The EU was critical of poor state responses to these outbreaks of violence. However, we note that the Government of India is currently drafting legislation to prevent, control and deal with the aftermath of communal violence. An earlier draft of the Communal Violence (Prevention, Control and Rehabilitation of Victims) Bill, deemed to be unsatisfactory, was withdrawn in order to be redrafted, and we are very encouraged by the evident willingness of the Government to engage with the concerns of minority groups.

