



EUROPEAN UNION

Statement by the European Union during the Closing Session of the OSCE Ministerial Council in Vilnius, 7 December 2011

FINAL VERSION

1. Twelve months on from Astana, the OSCE Ministerial Council here in Vilnius offered all participating States the ideal platform to translate the vision of our Heads of States and Government into concrete deliverables. We warmly thank Lithuania for seeking to do that in a principled and determined manner.
 2. The European Union has taken an ambitious and constructive approach in the run up to the Vilnius Ministerial Council in seeking to develop the OSCE across all three dimensions. We therefore welcome the progress on cross-dimensional issues notably on the conflict cycle, partners for cooperation including Afghanistan, as well as progress towards the future accession of Mongolia to the OSCE. It also proved possible to advance in the politico-military dimension, on transnational threats, as well as in the economic and environmental dimension. We reaffirm the EU's commitment to cooperate in the OSCE on all issues in order to promote comprehensive security.
 3. The European Union expresses its deep concern however at the lack of progress in the human dimension. Human rights, democracy and the rule of law are at the core of the OSCE and its comprehensive concept of security. We particularly regret that not all participating States have been able to agree to strengthen the commitments related to freedom of expression, notably to protect journalists from violence, harassment, prosecution and imprisonment. We also deeply regret that some participating States were not able to recognise that fundamental freedoms also cover the use of new technologies in the digital age. The signal sent to the
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participating States from the NGOs in the parallel OSCE civil society conference was loud and clear. They underlined the importance of strengthening the implementation of the human dimension notably as regards freedom of expression including on the internet.

4. The developments in the Southern Mediterranean have illustrated the universality of human rights and fundamental freedoms. Those same values are increasingly called into question in the OSCE region. The European Union therefore calls on all participating States to fully implement all OSCE principles and commitments. We remain convinced that we will not be able to advance toward comprehensive security and a genuine community of security without clear progress in the human dimension.
5. We strongly praise the role of the OSCE institutions in monitoring the implementation of our OSCE commitments and assisting the participating States in improving their record in this respect. We fully support the work of ODIHR in observing elections throughout the OSCE area. In this context, we reiterate the European Union statement made in the Plenary session yesterday commending the assessment presented by the OSCE/ODIHR on the elections to the State Duma of the Russian Federation and calling on Russia to duly implement ODIHR's recommendations. We also recall the statements made yesterday and today by the High Representative Catherine Ashton.
6. The European Union regrets that regional statements on the protracted conflicts in Georgia and in the Republic of Moldova could not be adopted, the latter despite the resumption of the formal "5+2" negotiations on 30 November and 1 December in Vilnius. In that context, we would like to recall the EU position expressed on these matters in our Astana Closing statement. The EU welcomes the Joint Statement by the Heads of Delegation of the Minsk Group countries and the Foreign Ministers of Armenia and Azerbaijan on the Nagorno Karabakh conflict.
7. The European Union confirms its expectation that significant and focused progress in all three dimensions, in particular in the human dimension, will be made in the forthcoming year under the Irish Chairmanship-in-Office leading to

the Dublin Ministerial Council in December 2012 and calls on all participating States to join in this effort.

The candidate countries, CROATIA*, the FORMER YUGOSLAV REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA*, MONTENEGRO* and ICELAND**, the countries of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidate countries ALBANIA, BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA and SERBIA, the European Free Trade Association countries LIECHTENSTEIN and NORWAY, members of the European Economic Area, as well as the REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA, GEORGIA, ANDORRA and SAN MARINO align themselves with this statement.

8. I kindly request this statement be attached to the journal of the day.

* Croatia, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Montenegro continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.

** Iceland continues to be a member of the EFTA and the European Economic Area