



EUROPEAN UNION

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EU Statement on the 20th anniversary of the OSCE Istanbul Summit

Mr. Chairman, please allow me to express on behalf of the European Union and its Member States our sincerest condolences to your country and to those who lost their loved ones in the earthquake last week.

The European Union and its Member States welcome, Mr Chairman, this thought-provoking subject on today's agenda, namely the 20th anniversary of the Istanbul Summit. We thank all the panellists for their interesting presentations.

The topic you proposed today, Mr. Chairman, is not an easy one. The Istanbul Summit was a landmark political event in the history of the OSCE. On this occasion, we would like to recall the important role of the Norwegian OSCE Chairmanship in the process leading to Istanbul and also thank Turkey for hosting the Heads of State and Government and Foreign Ministers of the 54 participating States at that time.

At the time, the Summit was seen, as it was rightly mentioned in the concept note, as a "bridge-builder to the 21st century". It took place at the end of the decade that saw huge geopolitical and security shifts in Europe, underpinned by the universal aspiration of people for freedom, democracy, prosperity and peace. Although the major Cold War confrontation between the two blocks has ended, the 1990s unfortunately witnessed new conflicts, some of which remain unresolved today.

Despite of the complex geopolitical situation the participating States managed to come to an agreement in November 1999, guided by their determination and a strong belief in the added value of a common approach to security issues and hope for a brighter and more peaceful future for the continent. The participating States reaffirmed OSCE commitments and principles, and agreed on the Charter for European Security, the adapted CFE Treaty and the Istanbul Declaration. It is also important to recall here the conclusion of the review process and the adoption of the Vienna Document 1999 as well as the launch of a broad and comprehensive discussion on all aspects of the spread of small arms and light weapons.

The Summit and its results can be approached from different perspectives by the participating States, analysing the commitments made in Istanbul and how and why they were, or were not, implemented afterwards. We need to focus on the current challenges while not forgetting what was agreed upon in Istanbul.

We should indeed not forget that the Istanbul OSCE Summit Declaration contains both the Vienna Document of 1999, Adapted CFE Treaty references, respective national Declarations and Statements as a package of measures designed to address serious security concerns and referred to as the Istanbul Commitments.

Focusing on these challenges, it is important to bear in mind and reaffirm again the commitments and principles that are at the heart of this Organisation, as enshrined in the Helsinki Final Act: sovereign equality of participating States, refraining from the threat or use of force, inviolability of frontiers, respect for the territorial integrity of States and host nation consent. Respect for these principles and commitments must be restored. This is one of the main lessons we can, and should, draw on after twenty years.

It is worth noting that the Charter for European Security includes important commitments in all three OSCE dimensions, and that it makes clear the links between these commitments in ensuring security in the OSCE area. It is as true today as it was 20 years ago that “peace and security in our region is best

guaranteed by the willingness and ability of each participating State to uphold democracy, the rule of law and respect for human rights”.

It is also 20 years since our commitment to put equality at the center of our policies, both at the level of our States and within the Organisation, and we look forward to an intensified discussion on making the full and equal participation of women a reality. As we know, the full, equal and meaningful participation of women, as well as gender equality more widely, are essential to achieving a more sustainable peace, as well as to prosperity and democracy in the OSCE area. This year, with UNSCR 1325 also celebrating its 20th anniversary, is an opportunity to make real and sustainable progress.

As already mentioned, 20 years ago the participating States managed to adopt the Vienna Document 1999, rightly described in the Summit Declaration as a "key element of politico-military co-operation and stability". The case for further modernisation of the Vienna Document, which we have long been supporting, is obvious. It would, undoubtedly, increase military stability, transparency and predictability. Over the years, the security challenges have become more complex and the technological progress has not stopped. We are convinced that the Vienna Document modernisation would bring greater long-term security for all participating States. We urge all participating States to show a similar level of determination and political will as was present in Istanbul, and engage actively and constructively in these important discussions at the OSCE this year, taking due account of all VD modernisation proposals on the table, including the joint proposal supported by 33 participating States.

Looking back at the results of the important and relevant summit in Istanbul only underlines that we have to continue to work towards creating an environment conducive to reinvigorating conventional arms control and CSBMs in Europe. In this context, we highly value and actively support the efforts undertaken in the

Structured Dialogue, to address the current and future challenges and risks to security in the OSCE area and to foster a greater understanding on these issues. This could serve as a common solid basis for a way forward.

Making positive progress on European security will require full respect for OSCE principles, and full implementation in letter and spirit of participating States' commitments. It will also require political will from all participating States to engage constructively at OSCE. These are clear messages from Istanbul 20 years ago that remain valid today.

Mr. Chairman, we thank you for the opportunity to exchange perspectives on this important topic. Thank you for your attention.

The Candidate Countries of the REPUBLIC of NORTH MACEDONIA*, MONTENEGRO*, SERBIA* and ALBANIA*, the Country of the Stabilisation and Association Process and Potential Candidate BOSNIA and HERZEGOVINA, and the EFTA countries ICELAND and LIECHTENSTEIN and members of the European Economic Area, as well as UKRAINE, the REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA, AZERBAIJAN, GEORGIA, ANDORRA and SAN MARINO align themselves with this statement.

* Republic of North Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Albania continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.