



## EUROPEAN UNION

### OSCE Permanent Council No. 1492 Vienna, 17 October 2024

#### **EU Statement in Response to the Acting Head of the OSCE Mission in Kosovo, Ms. Cornelia Taylor**

1. The European Union warmly welcomes the Head of the OSCE Mission in Kosovo, Ms. Cornelia Taylor, and thank her for the biannual report to the Permanent Council.
2. We reiterate our strong support for the valuable work carried out by the OSCE Mission in Kosovo, which has proven itself as a trusted partner of all communities, and contributes to a safe and secure, democratic, prosperous and multi-ethnic Kosovo\*<sup>1</sup>, based on respect for human rights, fundamental freedoms and the rule of law, including the rights of persons belonging to minorities. The EU welcomes the Mission's balanced approach based on three programmatic pillars: human rights and communities, democratisation, and security and public safety.
3. The EU welcomes the Mission's activities on promoting inter-community relations and emphasises the importance of coordination with relevant stakeholders for the protection of the rights of persons belonging to minorities and vulnerable groups. This includes ensuring their safety, protecting their property rights, including against contentious expropriations, and preserving their cultural and religious heritage, including the Special Protective Zones. We highlight the importance of engagement with civil society, including through youth-oriented activities, to enhance inter-ethnic relations and promote dialogue.

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<sup>1</sup> \* This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSCR 1244/1999 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence.

4. Improving the accountability and transparency of institutions remains equally important. We commend the Mission's continued assistance in strengthening Kosovo's democratic institutions and its focus on enhancing public safety, the rule of law, and transparent and inclusive good governance at both central and local levels. The EU highly values the Mission's contributions to enhancing Kosovo's inter-institutional co-operation in addressing security challenges and risks related to trafficking in human beings, terrorism leading to extremism, organised crime and corruption, as well as hate crimes, and attacks against journalists and public defamation campaigns. We particularly appreciate the Mission's activities in support of Kosovo's legislative and policy agenda, notably its contribution for the review of thirty-one draft legal and policy acts, and its continuous engagement in the implementation of the EU-funded OSCE Regional Trial Monitoring Project in the Western Balkans.
5. The EU appreciates the Mission's monitoring and early warning activities in light of the fragile and complex security environment in the north of Kosovo. We welcome its continued good cooperation and coordination with partners on the ground, including the EU in Kosovo, KFOR, and the UN in support of multilateral efforts aimed at de-escalating tensions and implementing obligations under the EU-facilitated Dialogue.
6. Recalling its statements on 3 June and 19 September 2023, the EU closely monitors developments in the north of Kosovo. More than a year after the violent attack against Kosovo Police in Banjska/Banjskë on 24th September 2023, the EU reiterates its call on Serbia to swiftly prosecute those responsible for the attacks. In parallel to the investigations, it is important that both sides refrain from any action that could further escalate the situation.
7. In light of the developments in the four northern municipalities of Leposavić/q, North Mitrovica/e, Zvečan/Zveçan and Zubin Potok, over the last months, the EU stresses that a sustainable political solution for these municipalities can only be achieved through the permanent return of Kosovo Serbs to the institutions and full participation in the election process, particularly with the upcoming Assembly elections scheduled for 9 February 2025.
8. Pristina's decision to lift its ban on imports of Serbian goods at the Merdare border crossing is a positive step towards restoring free trade in the region and unblocking decision-making in CEFTA, especially in the context of the Growth Plan for the Western

Balkans. This Plan aims to bring the Western Balkans closer to the EU single market, boost economic growth and accelerate the regional socio-economic convergence.

9. The EU reiterates its concern about the recent unilateral and uncoordinated actions by Pristina against Belgrade-supported offices and the closure of nine branches of Serbia Postal savings bank in the north of Kosovo that negatively affect the daily lives and living conditions of the local communities and put the fragile security situation on the ground at risk. The EU expects both Pristina and Belgrade to address and resolve open issues between them in the EU-facilitated Dialogue.
10. We underline that there is no alternative to the EU-facilitated dialogue. The Agreement on the Path to Normalisation and its Implementation Annex, adopted in February and March 2023, offer a clear platform for advancing the normalisation of relations. The obligations stemming from this Agreement remain valid and binding, and have been incorporated in their respective European paths. Its implementation is urgent and crucial for the stability of the entire region and their respective European paths. We call on both sides to fully implement all obligations and past commitments without delay or preconditions, including the establishment of the Association/Community of Serb-Majority Municipalities in Kosovo.
11. Finally, with a strong interest in political and security consolidation in the region, the EU remains determined to continue assisting Kosovo towards lasting stability and prosperity. We wish Ms Taylor and the dedicated Mission team every success and assure them of the EU's resolute support in their important work.

The Candidate Countries NORTH MACEDONIA\*, MONTENEGRO\*, UKRAINE, and the REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA, and the EFTA countries ICELAND and LIECHTENSTEIN, members of the European Economic Area, align themselves with this statement.

\* North Macedonia and Montenegro continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.