



EUROPEAN UNION

OSCE Permanent Council No 1061 Vienna, 2 July 2015

EU statement in response to H.E. Frank-Walter Steinmeier, Foreign Minister of Germany

The European Union warmly welcomes the incoming OSCE Chairperson-in-Office, Federal Minister for Foreign Affairs of Germany Frank-Walter Steinmeier, to the Permanent Council. We greatly appreciate Germany's readiness to assume the Chairmanship of the OSCE at this critical point in time. Russia's illegal annexation of Crimea and Sevastopol – which we continue to condemn and will not recognise – and destabilising actions in parts of eastern Ukraine have seriously violated the basic principles of the OSCE. As a result, we face the most serious security crisis in Europe in decades. In order to overcome this crisis we need to restore respect for the fundamental principles upon which the OSCE is based.

Mr Minister, we fully support your emphasis on the need to ensure implementation of all OSCE principles and commitments and to further strengthen the ability of the OSCE to respond to this and potential future crisis based on the comprehensive concept of security. Achieving tangible progress in the resolution of the protracted conflicts in the Republic of Moldova, Georgia and of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict in the existing formats remains a top priority for the European Union. Intensified efforts to resolve existing conflicts are needed. We remain committed to strengthening the OSCE's impact across the conflict cycle while fully respecting existing mandates. Experience shows that having the early warning information is not enough by itself. What is needed is the enhanced capacity and the political will of all sides to also act early.

We welcome the overarching priorities of the German Chairmanship across the three dimensions and reflecting the comprehensive concept of security. In the first dimension, full implementation of the politico-military commitments, revitalisation, and modernisation of the existing Conventional Arms Control and CSBM regimes,

including the Vienna Document, to ensure stability, transparency and predictability, remains a priority task. Such a process should reflect the experience and lessons learned during the crisis in and around Ukraine. We welcome the focus on counter-terrorism, and in particular on violent extremism and radicalisation leading to terrorism. We also welcome the focus on cyber security. We hope that implementation of the first set of CBMs will intensify further and that work on a second set will lead to a result this year.

In the second dimension, we commend the emphasis on good governance and its substantial linkages with anti-corruption, anti-money laundering and combating the financing of terrorism. We will be interested to hear more in due course about the intention to explore other topics such as the environment, business interaction and investment climate and migration from the perspective of good governance

We also welcome the planned focus of the German Chairmanship in the third dimension, notably the focus on the fundamental rights to freedom of expression and freedom of association and assembly as well as on combating all forms of intolerance and discrimination. We fully agree that further work is needed to ensure full implementation of our commitments in the human dimension and to address current shortcomings. We continue to be deeply concerned that these principles are being increasingly challenged in parts of the OSCE space and recall that there can be no security without respect for democracy, the rule of law, human rights, and fundamental freedoms.

We highly appreciate the German incoming Chairmanship's commitment to strengthening the role of the autonomous institutions, whose mandates and autonomy we fully support. Their work to assist participating States in the implementation of commitments remains indispensable. We also reiterate our firm support for OSCE field operations and are concerned by the current tendency towards downgrading field presences.

We welcome the importance that the Chairmanship will attach to further involving civil society. We also wish to highlight our support for continued efforts in promoting gender equality, women's political and economic empowerment, and elimination of gender-based violence and sexual violence in conflict across the OSCE area.

Recent and ongoing developments show that the security of the OSCE area is inextricably linked to that of adjacent areas. We therefore welcome the increased attention to our partners for cooperation, including when addressing transnational threats. We are grateful for the efforts that Germany is putting in chairing the Mediterranean Contact Group and we look forward to the Mediterranean conference in October in Jordan.

Mr Minister, next week in Helsinki we will mark the 40th anniversary of the Helsinki Final Act. We hope that our meeting there can contribute to a process of restoring respect for the fundamental principles of the OSCE. We count on the active role of the incoming Chairmanship in facilitating such a process in the future. The European Union will support you in this endeavour.

The Candidate Countries the FORMER YUGOSLAV REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA, MONTENEGRO*, ICELAND+ and ALBANIA*, the Country of the Stabilisation and Association Process and Potential Candidate BOSNIA and HERZEGOVINA, and the EFTA country LIECHTENSTEIN, member of the European Economic Area, as well as UKRAINE, the REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA and SAN MARINO align themselves with this statement.

* The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro and Albania continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.

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