

**STATEMENT BY THE EUROPEAN UNION AT THE
1163rd MEETING OF THE OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

9 November 2017

**In response to the Co-Chairmen of the Minsk Group,
the Personal Representative of the Chairperson-in-Office on the Conflict
Dealt with by the OSCE Minsk Conference and the
Head of the High-Level Planning Group**

The European Union welcomes the Co-Chairmen of the Minsk Group Igor Popov, Stéphane Visconti and Andrew Schofer, the Personal Representative of the Chairperson-in-Office Ambassador Andrzej Kasprzyk and the Head of the High-Level Planning Group (H LPG) Colonel Hans Lampalzer and thanks them for their detailed reports.

The European Union reiterates its support for the Minsk Group and its full confidence in the Co-Chairmen to achieve progress in the search for a political, equitable and lasting settlement of the conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh, which is vital for the future of the region. We call on the parties to take more advantage of the efforts of the Co-Chairmen.

The European Union is attentively following the development of the situation in Nagorno-Karabakh, which remains highly volatile. Last year once again saw too many victims, and the ceasefire is being violated almost on a daily basis. The use of heavy artillery and the targeting of the civilian population are particularly worrying.

We repeat our condemnation of any use of force and call on the parties to refrain from any action likely to increase tension. To that end, we call on the parties to strictly observe the ceasefire in accordance with their commitments. In general, the parties should exercise restraint both on the ground and in their public statements.

The European Union welcomes the resumption of high-level contacts at the presidential summit held in Geneva on 16 October. We consider the agreement between the Presidents of Armenia and Azerbaijan on an intensification of the negotiation process, including at the ministerial level, and on new measures to reduce tensions along the line of contact to be very important.

We continue to support the implementation of the confidence-building measures agreed in 2016 at the summit meetings in Vienna and St. Petersburg, including the enlargement of the office of the Personal Representative, the humanitarian measure of exchanging information on missing persons under the aegis of the International Committee of

the Red Cross and the continued discussion on the creation of an incident investigation mechanism.

The European Union reiterates its commitment to a peaceful settlement of the conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh on the basis of the fundamental principles of the Charter of the United Nations and the Helsinki Final Act. It recognizes the untenable and dangerous nature of the status quo and calls for progress in the drafting of a comprehensive peace treaty. The European Union remains willing through its Special Representative in particular to support efforts to resolve the conflict. It is committed through its programme for facilitating contacts between the societies divided by the conflict, the European Partnership for the Peaceful Settlement of the Conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh. It remains available for the setting up of other confidence-building measures to support and complement the Minsk Group. The European Union would like to take this opportunity to thank Ambassador Herbert Salber for his work as Special Representative over the past three years and to wish every success to his successor Toivo Klaar.

Mr. Chairperson,

We should like to express our positive appreciation for the work carried out, sometimes under difficult security conditions, by the Personal Representative of the Chairperson-in-Office on the Conflict Dealt with by the OSCE Minsk Conference, Ambassador Kasprzyk, and his team. The European Union attaches the greatest importance to the continuation without obstacle of their ceasefire observation activities on the line of contact and along the border between Armenia and Azerbaijan.

We thank Ambassador Kasprzyk for also providing other examples of the work carried out by his office, such as the humanitarian operations. All of these activities help without a doubt to reduce tensions in the region and are a valuable instrument for implementing confidence-building measures on the ground. Since the closure of the mission in Yerevan, the office of the Personal Representative is the only OSCE presence in the region.

We support the implementation in good faith of the decision to enlarge the office of the Personal Representative, which should also result in an intensification of the observation missions. This would be an important step towards strengthening trust between the parties and making progress in the conflict settlement process.

Mr. Chairperson,

The European Union also reiterates its full support for the planning and deployment of a peacekeeping mission by the HLPG headed by Colonel Lampalzer. The deployment of this mission will depend nevertheless on the conclusion by the parties of a comprehensive agreement on the basis of the principles identified for the peaceful settlement of the conflict under the aegis of the Minsk Group. We support the measures taken to improve the HLPG's planning capacities, such as the participation by members of the HLPG in the Personal Representative's observation exercises, the whole-of-the-OSCE approach, and the continued contact with other international peacekeeping organizations. The arrangement of a fact-finding mission, which has not been possible for years, would be useful in this regard.

In conclusion, the European Union reiterates its full support for the Co-Chairmen of the Minsk Group, Ambassador Kasprzyk and the HLPG. These processes are essential components of the OSCE's architecture for the peaceful settlement of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict.

The European Union also reiterates its willingness to work closely with the parties to foster stability and prosperity and the consolidation of democracy and the rule of law in the region and to strengthen their co-operative relations in particular within the Eastern Partnership.

The candidate countries the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia¹, Montenegro¹, Serbia¹ and Albania¹, the country of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidate Bosnia and Herzegovina, as well as San Marino, align themselves with this statement.

¹ The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Albania continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.