



## EUROPEAN UNION

### **OSCE Special Permanent Council N°1085 Vienna, 14 January 2016**

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#### **EU Statement in Response to H.E. Frank-Walter Steinmeier, Foreign Minister of Germany**

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The European Union and its Member States warmly welcome the Chairperson-in-office, Foreign Minister Steinmeier, to the Permanent Council. We greatly appreciate Germany's readiness to assume the responsibility for leading the OSCE at this critical point in time. The OSCE's work continues to be overshadowed by the crisis in and around Ukraine, to the detriment of security, trust and confidence. Mr. Minister, we therefore welcome your leitmotif of renewing dialogue, rebuilding trust and restoring security and your focus on implementing commitments.

Russia's illegal annexation of Crimea and the continued destabilisation of eastern Ukraine continue to challenge the basic principles and commitments of the OSCE. The European Union supports all efforts that can lead to a politically sustainable solution to the crisis, which upholds respect for Ukrainian sovereignty, independence, unity and territorial integrity, in line with OSCE principles and commitments. We strongly support the efforts in the Normandy format to reach such a solution and commend Germany's and your own personal engagement in this format. We also strongly support the indispensable and impartial role of the SMM and the work of Ambassador Sajdik. We support a timely extension of the mission's current mandate and the provision of necessary resources. Improving access and security for the observers, not least in light of ongoing restrictions and recent disturbing intimidation of monitors, remains key and we appreciate your efforts in this respect.

We also support your focus on resolution of the protracted conflicts in the Republic of Moldova and Georgia and of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, which remains a top priority for the European Union. We agree that the OSCE's capacities and impact across the conflict cycle should be strengthened.

We welcome your focus on confidence- and security-building measures and conventional arms control. We stress in particular the need to substantially modernise the Vienna Document.

We agree on the need to prioritise counter-terrorism work and in particular countering and preventing violent extremism and radicalisation leading to terrorism, while respecting human rights, fundamental freedoms and the rule of law. Working with youth is important to this end. We also welcome the focus on cyber security and hope we can agree an additional set of confidence-building measures early this year.

We also support the focus on good governance, including the link to environmental governance, migration, anti-corruption and business interaction. We remain concerned by the issue of climate change and its impact on security, as well as the protection of energy networks.

There can be no sustainable security without respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, democracy and the rule of law. We are deeply concerned by the backtracking on these commitments in parts of the OSCE area. We welcome the particular focus planned for this year on the fundamental rights to freedom of expression, including the safety of journalists and the problem of propaganda in times of conflict, as well as freedom of association and peaceful assembly. In this regard, we recall the joint statement on fundamental freedoms in Belgrade by 44 participating States. We underline that our shared values, principles and commitments should continue more than ever to guide us in our work as the best defense against all forms of intolerance.

We encourage you to continue exploring ways in which the OSCE could play a useful and complementary role in response to the unprecedented flow of refugees and migrants in the OSCE area. In this regard, we would like to underline the unique role of this organisation in combatting trafficking in human beings. Work on gender equality and issues relating to women, peace and security should also remain high on the OSCE agenda, including through adoption of the Addendum to the Gender Action Plan.

We strongly support the outstanding work carried out by our autonomous institutions, and their mandates. We are concerned by the sustained attacks and efforts by some participating States to restrict their work and mandate. We highly appreciate the German Chair's commitment to strengthening the role of the institutions, as well as the involvement of civil society in the work of the OSCE.

Given very concerning events in the Middle East and North Africa, the OSCE's southern region and strengthened cooperation with Partner countries should remain a priority.

We welcome the timely adoption of the 2016 Budget. We appreciate the Chair's readiness to make progress during 2016 on important horizontal issues, including Staff Standard Costs, evaluation, and scales of contribution, to ensure the continued effectiveness and efficiency of the Organization.

We look forward to working with you to preserve and strengthen the OSCE acquis of commitments and principles and the Organization itself on the basis of the comprehensive concept of security. You can count on support from the European Union in these endeavors and we wish you and your able team every success.

The Candidate Countries the FORMER YUGOSLAV REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA\*, MONTENEGRO\* and ALBANIA\*, the Country of the Stabilisation and Association Process and Potential Candidate BOSNIA and HERZEGOVINA, and the EFTA country ICELAND, member of the European Economic Area, as well as UKRAINE, the REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA, GEORGIA, ANDORRA 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.