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STATEMENT BY THE EUROPEAN UNION AT THE 1296th MEETING OF THE OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL

Vienna, 17 December 2020

On the statement by the OSCE Minsk Group Co-Chairs

The European Union welcomes the statement by the OSCE Minsk Group Co-Chairs of 14 December on the visit to Baku and Yerevan by the United States and French Co-Chairs, accompanied by the Personal Representative of the Chairperson-in-Office and, respectively, the ambassador of Russia in Baku and the Russian chargé d'affaires in Yerevan, representing the Russian Co-Chair, who was unable to attend and to whom we wish a speedy recovery.

The European Union is pleased to note that the delegation was received at the highest level in Azerbaijan and Armenia to resume the dialogue and discuss the modalities for continuing the OSCE's commitment. This visit took place at a particularly propitious moment, in the wake of the joint ministerial statement by the OSCE Minsk Group Co-Chair countries published on 3 December in the context of the Ministerial Council meeting in Tirana.

The European Union also welcomes the first exchange of prisoners of war and detainees between Azerbaijan and Armenia on 14 December. This sends an important message to the families concerned and, more generally, to the populations of the two countries. The European Union hopes that this priority process will continue, along with the identification and repatriation of soldiers' remains.

On the other hand, the European Union feels obliged to express its concern at the recent reports of ceasefire violations and resultant casualties and calls on the parties to comply fully with the ceasefire obligations of 10 November following the tripartite statement, as well as other commitments undertaken previously by them. It urges them to refrain from any action or rhetoric likely to increase tensions and instead to foster an environment conducive to stabilizing the situation.

In conclusion, the European Union reiterates its full support for the international format of the Minsk Group led by its Co-Chairs, which seeks a negotiated, lasting and comprehensive solution to the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. It is willing to contribute to this, including through the implementation of confidence-building measures.

The European Union also reaffirms its support for the Personal Representative of the Chairperson-in-Office and, for its part, remains fully committed to the efforts to achieve lasting peace and foster prosperous development in the region.

The candidate countries the Republic of North Macedonia¹, Montenegro¹, Serbia¹ and Albania¹, the country of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidate Bosnia and Herzegovina, the European Free Trade Association countries and members of the European Economic Area Iceland and Liechtenstein, as well as Andorra and San Marino, align themselves with this statement.

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