



EUROPEAN UNION

**OSCE Permanent Council Nr 860
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EU statement on the passing away of Max van der Stoel

The European Union would like to add its voice to the condolences by the Chairman-in-Office on the passing away of Max van der Stoel on 23 April.

The European Union remembers Max van der Stoel as a staunch advocate of freedom and human rights. As minister for Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands, he helped broker the Helsinki Final Act in 1975 and, as the first OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities, moulded and developed this OSCE institution into the conflict prevention institution that we know today.

During times of interethnic tensions and even violence in the 1990s, Max van der Stoel operated behind the scenes to prevent conflict. His independent engagement covered most of the OSCE area. Conflicts were averted and lives were saved because of his tireless efforts. Trying to prevent conflict is hard, unglamorous and sometimes ungrateful work, but Max van der Stoel had a unique talent and stamina in this respect.

As OSCE High Commissioner, Max van der Stoel spoke softly, but with great determination. The quiet passing of this quiet diplomat reminds us that human rights and conflict prevention are not old-fashioned notions: they are needed now more than ever.

The candidate countries TURKEY, CROATIA*, the FORMER YUGOSLAV REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA*, MONTENEGRO* and ICELAND**, the countries of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidate countries ALBANIA, BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA and SERBIA, the European Free Trade Association countries LIECHTENSTEIN and NORWAY, members of the European Economic Area, as well as UKRAINE, the REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA, ARMENIA, GEORGIA, ANDORRA and SAN MARINO align themselves with this statement.

*Croatia, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Montenegro continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.

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