



EUROPEAN UNION

**OSCE Permanent Council Nr 982  
Vienna, 30 January 2014**

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**EU Statement in Response to the Address by the President  
of the International Committee of the Red Cross, Mr Peter  
Maurer**

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Dear President Maurer,

On behalf of the European Union and its Member States, it is a real pleasure to welcome you to the Permanent Council today and to thank you for your statement. Your presence gives us an opportunity to pay tribute to the unique organisation you lead.

The International Committee of the Red Cross is born out of the realisation, revolutionary in its days, that those taking part in armed conflicts have rights, and that even in the least human of situations, rules apply that aim at protecting human beings, their life and their dignity. The scope of these rules has progressively been extended, applying these core principles to the different situations in which life and dignity are being challenged, whatever the nature of the conflict and the status of the belligerents.

Mr President, you have yourself recently paid the European Union one of the most valuable compliments when you said, during a recent visit to Brussels, that humanitarian law was part of the genetic code of the European integration process.

We want to be true to ourselves then, and use this opportunity to once again commend the ICRC for its tireless and invaluable work in protecting the lives and dignity of victims of armed conflicts worldwide. The way you place the individual at the centre of your action is a source of inspiration, a lesson for all of us. Mrs Georgieva, EC Commissioner for International Cooperation, Humanitarian Aid and Crisis Response, recently called the ICRC the 'indispensable organisation'. It is easy to see why.

The European Union fully supports the Committee, and also the National Societies and the International Federation worldwide in their mission of providing direct assistance and protection on the ground, and upholding and promoting humanitarian principles and rules.

The European Consensus on Humanitarian Aid underlines the unique nature of your mandate, and our determination to work closely with you. And the 2005 Guidelines on International Humanitarian Law, as well as our strategic framework on Human Rights, commit us to promote compliance with international humanitarian law. Achieving full compliance remains an important objective for the European Union. The initiative to explore the possibility of setting up a mechanism at international level to review compliance of existing instruments is of crucial importance and interest to us. We need to discuss these issues regularly, and use every opportunity to remind all actors of their relevance. Once again, Mr President, you can count on us.

You have, in your presentation today, underlined that the OSCE area remains plagued by conflicts and by difficult post-conflict situations. A substantial part of our efforts in this organisation aim, directly or indirectly, at resolving these conflicts and improving the situations of those affected. We continue to look for ways to resolve protracted conflicts and work towards reconciliation, as well as to improve our ability to respond more effectively to problems as they arise across the conflict cycle. While these conflicts continue, the work that the ICRC does, and which you have highlighted today, on issues such as missing persons, or local confidence building measures, are concrete and valuable contributions towards our shared goal of stability and peace.

The work of the ICRC and your focus on the individual should be a reminder to us that the work we do here on conflict – and what we should be doing – must aim at improving the lives of those who have been affected by conflicts and protecting their rights. They, not least displaced persons, refugees, prisoners, victims of sexual violence, and families of those killed or unaccounted for, must serve as a reminder of the urgency of our common task.

We are determined to use all avenues, in this organisation and elsewhere, to push for a resolution of these conflicts, which have no place in our times. We need to see a renewed sense of urgency and political will from those who are party to the

conflicts to work for a real and sustainable settlement, for the sake of the long-term future of both the countries involved and our region as a whole. But while conflicts do persist, the ICRC must be given full operational freedom to act according to its mandate, including granting full access to places of detention.

We want to conclude this statement by offering our support to the ICRC staff in Geneva and, crucially, all over the world, who carry out their duty often in the most dangerous circumstances, with tenacity, with unparalleled professionalism and sense of duty.

Welcome again, Mr President, and we wish you every success in carrying out your important mission.

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

\* 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 of the European Economic Area.