



## EUROPEAN UNION

### OSCE Permanent Council No 1148 Vienna, 1 June 2017

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#### **EU statement in response to the Address by Representative of the Chair of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Czech Republic, Mr. Ivo Šrámek**

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It is a pleasure for the European Union to warmly welcome Deputy Foreign Minister Ivo Šrámek to the Permanent Council of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe. Mr. Deputy Minister, we congratulate you and the Czech Republic for assuming for the second time the Chairmanship of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe. We have listened with interest to your priorities and planned events as Chair of the Committee of Ministers and we thank you for your presentation.

As you very well pointed out, your country has assumed the Chairmanship at a difficult time when we are faced with unprecedented challenges to our security, peace and democracy. In this regard, we strongly condemn Russia's illegal annexation of Crimea and Sevastopol and its actions in eastern Ukraine. Furthermore, we are worried by the shrinking space for civil society and the dire human rights situation in many parts of the OSCE, an increase in terrorism, violent extremism and radicalisation; we are facing large migration and refugee flows, as well as a growing number in the manifestations of intolerance and discrimination. Therefore, the focus of the Czech Chairmanship on promoting and protecting human rights for all people without any discrimination, gender equality, supporting democracy and active citizenship, strengthening the rule of law and promoting human rights education could not be more timely, addressing also many of the challenges which we are confronted with in the OSCE area. We welcome your Chairmanship's support to the European Court of Human Rights' work to ensure the long-term effectiveness of the European Convention system. The implementation of judgments is crucial in ensuring that the common understanding of the requirements

of the Convention in respect of rule of law, human rights and democracy in Europe is translated into concrete actions.

We also welcome your intention to strengthen cooperation and coordination with other international organisations, among which you mentioned the OSCE and the European Union.

The OSCE and the Council of Europe have a well-established and long-lasting relationship, based on shared principles, the European Convention on Human Rights and other legal instruments, as well as on a common goal: the promotion of peace, stability and security on the basis of democracy, rule of law and respect for human rights in Europe and beyond. We welcome the continuous dialogue and practical cooperation between the OSCE and Council of Europe, which underline the complementarity and mutually reinforcing nature of the two organisations. We appreciate the ongoing work in the identified priority areas: fight against terrorism, combatting trafficking in human beings, promoting tolerance and non-discrimination and protection of rights of persons belonging to national minorities. We likewise welcome your interest in further promoting cooperation in the area of media freedom and election observation. We look forward to the planned events with the OSCE Austrian Chairmanship on the topics to which the European Union attaches great importance: combating extremism and radicalisation, and internet freedom. And there is one thing which is key for the Council of Europe, as you rightly underline, and for the OSCE: the implementation of existing obligations and commitments by all member states.

This year the European Union and the Council of Europe celebrate ten years of cooperation on the basis of shared principles of human rights, democracy and rule of law. Our relationship remains solid and represents a milestone for the protection of human rights in a vast area of the world. We welcome your intention to further strengthen our cooperation.

Mr. Deputy Minister, we thank you once more for sharing your views with us today and we wish you every success in fulfilling the priorities of the Czech Chairmanship of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe, as well in all your future endeavours.

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 countries ICELAND and LIECHTENSTEIN, members 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.