

**STATEMENT BY THE EUROPEAN UNION AT THE
1147th MEETING OF THE OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

25 May 2017

**In response to the Head of the OSCE Programme Office in Bishkek and
the Director of the Academy in Bishkek**

The European Union and its Member States would like to welcome Ambassador Pierre von Arx on the occasion of his first presentation to the Permanent Council and Mr. Alexander Wolters, Director of the Academy in Bishkek.

In our opinion, Central Asia should remain a priority for the OSCE, particularly in view of the evolution of the regional security context. We welcome and support the development of good-neighbourly relations between the countries of the region.

We trust that the adoption of the new mandate will make it possible to strengthen co-operation between the OSCE and Kyrgyzstan. We should also like to acknowledge the efforts by the entire staff of the mission to ensure the best possible outcome of the transition period. The EU believes that it is important for the Programme Office to conduct activities in the three dimensions with equal weight. We call on the Kyrgyz authorities to co-operate with the Office accordingly. We stress the role played by international staff in endeavouring to strengthen local capacities and thus support the maintenance of a significant international presence within the Programme Office.

Regarding the politico-military dimension, the EU recognizes the importance of issues relating to transnational threats and border security. We are in favour of greater co-ordination with the EU in these matters and with the OSCE Office in Tajikistan and with the Border Management Staff College in Dushanbe. Combating violent extremism and radicalization leading to terrorism is also an essential component of the work of the Programme Office, along with early warning and conflict prevention. In that context, we regret the closure of the offices in Osh.

The EU welcomes the Office's efforts to improve dialogue and trust between ethnic communities and the police. These activities should be maintained to ensure the continuity and sustainability of the results of the work of Community Security Initiative.

In the economic and environmental dimension, we support the focus on good governance, combating corruption and money laundering. We welcome the co-operation with the Programme Office in Astana with a view to safeguarding a reliable water supply.

In the human dimension, which is a priority for the EU, we urge the Programme Office to continue its work to promote human rights and fundamental freedoms and appreciate the expertise offered to the Kyrgyz authorities in their reform of the criminal justice system. We would encourage the Kyrgyz authorities to continue the implementation of reforms relating to the prevention of torture and the prison system. We are pleased to note the mission's awareness-raising activities in relation to the role and responsibility of the media in combating violent extremism and support the elaboration by the Programme Office of additional measures to assist the media.

We welcome the recent positive developments regarding the rights of women in Kyrgyzstan, as illustrated, for example, by the entry into force in April of the Law against Domestic Violence. We urge the Kyrgyz authorities to continue in this direction and are pleased to be able to count on the support of the Programme Office, whose activities in conjunction with civil society have enabled real progress to be made. Moreover, we attach great importance to the continuation by the Programme Office of its valuable work in combating trafficking in human beings.

The presidential elections at the end of 2017 will mark a decisive stage in determining Kyrgyzstan's progress towards a parliamentary democracy. We welcome the considerable support provided by the Programme Office to the authorities in their preparation of this important event, in particular the account taken of the recommendations mentioned in the reports by the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights.

The Academy in Bishkek is a flagship project for the OSCE. It enjoys an excellent reputation in the region and helps to strengthen security and regional co-operation in Central Asia and with Afghanistan. At the same time, however, the mainly extrabudgetary financing of the Academy continues to put its long-term sustainability at risk. In that context, we strongly support the inclusion of a larger part of the Academy's activities in the Unified Budget.

Finally, we call on the Kyrgyz authorities to comply with their commitments undertaken within the OSCE to provide tax exemption for the field mission staff or to reimburse deductions from the Unified Budget.

As a long-standing partner of Kyrgyzstan, the EU will continue to support the new Kyrgyz Government in its efforts to achieve progress in socio-economic development, good governance, the rule of law, democratization and respect for human rights.

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

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