



EUROPEAN UNION

**OSCE Permanent Council N° 1171
Vienna, 11 January 2018**

**EU Statement in Response to the OSCE CiO Mr. Angelino
Alfano, Italian Minister of Foreign Affairs**

The European Union and its Members States warmly welcome the new OSCE Chairperson in Office, Italian Minister of Foreign Affairs Angelino Alfano, to the first meeting of the Permanent Council in 2018.

Mr. Minister, you assume the OSCE chairmanship at a challenging time for European security as a scan of the OSCE region highlights issues of the greatest concern: the violation of international law as enshrined in the Charter of the UN, of fundamental OSCE principles, notably the violation of international borders, destabilizing actions, growing threats to the enjoyment of fundamental freedoms and human rights, the shortage of military transparency as well as terrorism and violent extremism and challenges related to large migration and refugee flows. The principles and commitments we agreed in Helsinki and in Paris remain the foundation for sustainable peace in Europe. Respect for those principles and commitments must be restored without further ado.

Russia's illegal annexation of Crimea and Sevastopol, which we will not recognize, and its aggressive and destabilizing actions in parts of eastern Ukraine remain the most serious violations of our fundamental OSCE principles and commitments today. We therefore welcome that the resolution of this conflict will remain at the top of the Italian CiO agenda.

We fully share your call for the full implementation of the Minsk Agreements, unconditional respect of the ceasefire and full, safe and unhindered access for the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission throughout Ukraine. These are important steps toward a sustainable political solution, which upholds respect for Ukraine's

sovereignty, independence, unity and territorial integrity within its internationally recognised borders and in line with OSCE principles and commitments. We strongly support the efforts in the Normandy format as well as the work in the Trilateral Contact Group to reach such a solution. We also reaffirm our strong support for the SMM and condemn any attempts to intimidate them or to impede their work which they carry out in challenging circumstances. In this context, we stress the importance of re-establishing the functionality of the JCCC and of enabling efforts to improve the humanitarian and security situation on the ground.

Protracted conflicts in Georgia, in the Republic of Moldova and the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict continue to deserve our attention and we appreciate Italy's commitment to continue strengthening the OSCE's work to address such conflicts through the existing formats. We appreciate the continued focus on the humanitarian aspects of conflict situations, which remain of utmost concern.

In many parts of the OSCE region we are regrettably witnessing attempts to weaken existing OSCE commitments, also ongoing increasing restrictions on civil society, the crackdown on human rights and fundamental freedoms, growing pressure on human rights defenders, attacks on journalists and other media actors and increasing intolerance. The EU will therefore continue its longstanding engagement in ending impunity and strengthening accountability. These worrying trends represent serious challenges to our security. There can be no lasting security without respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, democracy and the rule of law. In this regard, our human dimension commitments are more relevant than ever, and we underline the importance we attach to the third dimension in the OSCE concept of comprehensive security. All participating States must live up to our commitments and aim to strengthen them by working together constructively. We share your view that the autonomous institutions play an indispensable role for our common security across the OSCE area and we therefore welcome preserving and strengthening their role, as well as the role of civil society. Safeguarding the open character of the OSCE in relation to civil society organizations is of key importance to the EU. We also take this opportunity to underline the value of the OSCE field operations.

We remain committed to the full implementation of the existing commitments in the politico-military area and believe that our work on the modernisation of these instruments, including the Vienna Document, must continue. We welcome your intention to further develop the Structured Dialogue, building on the valuable work undertaken in 2017.

Concerns remain regarding large-scale and snap military exercises and military deployments in the vicinity of international borders without adequate transparency, as well as hazardous incidents, and a selective approach to the implementation of the OSCE's politico-military commitments. As part of developing the understanding of threat perceptions and security concerns, we support the continuation of the process to map relevant military trends, force postures and exercises.

We will continue to engage in the Structured Dialogue as a means of addressing the current and future challenges and risks in the OSCE area, to foster a greater understanding of these issues could serve as a common, solid basis for a way forwards through an open, transparent, inclusive and honest exchange of views. We look forward to working together with your Chairmanship as well as the FSC Chairs and the Chair of the Informal Working Group to this end.

We welcome the attention you intend to give to transnational threats: the fight against terrorism and radicalization, cyber security, trafficking as well as corruption. Attention is warranted as they are part and parcel of the comprehensive concept of security which is the hallmark of our Organization.

We welcome your intention to work in continuity with the two previous Chairmanships on the economic and environmental dimension, such as promoting economic progress and security through innovation, human capital, connectivity, good governance and the transition towards renewable energy. We thank Italy for putting many important topics on our second dimension agenda which will reflect the potential of the OSCE to contribute to security and stability in the OSCE region through activities in the second dimension.

The OSCE's Mediterranean region also figures among your priorities in 2018. We appreciated the efforts of your country as Chair of the Mediterranean Contact Group over the past year, including the Mediterranean Conference in Palermo,

focusing on the common interests and risks that impact security in the Mediterranean region and the OSCE area as a whole. Strengthened cooperation with Partner countries should remain a priority.

Along with dialogue and ownership, your motto incorporates the concept of responsibility. We all want to see a well-functioning Organization and it is the responsibility of all participating States to adopt decisions that enable this Organization to continue carrying out its tasks effectively. To this end we, the EU Member States, underline the necessity to come to a swift agreement on an adequate budget for 2018 and new scales of contribution.

In concluding, we wish to state our great appreciation for Italy's readiness to assume the chairmanship of the OSCE at a critical juncture. Minister Alfano, we look forward to working with you and your able team during your chairmanship to strengthen respect for the OSCE acquis of commitments and principles and for the Organization itself on the basis of the comprehensive concept of security. We wish you every success. You can count on our full support.

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, LIECHTENSTEIN and NORWAY, members of the European Economic Area, as well as UKRAINE, the REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA, 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.