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## EUROPEAN UNION

**OSCE Special Permanent Council Nr 846  
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### **EU statement in response to the address by the Chairperson-in-Office, Foreign Minister of Lithuania, H.E. Audronius Ažubalis**

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The European Union congratulates H.E. Audronius Ažubalis, Foreign Minister of the Republic of Lithuania, on the assumption of the functions of the Chairperson-in-Office of the OSCE. We warmly welcome him to the Permanent Council for the first time in his new capacity and thank him for his address and the work programme outlining the priorities of the Lithuanian Chairmanship in 2011.

The EU fully supports the goal that we need to work towards the realisation of a security community free of dividing lines, where commitments are implemented, the use of force is unthinkable and human rights, fundamental freedoms, democratic principles and the rule of law are fully respected.

We welcome the Chairmanship-in-Office's intention that the peaceful and negotiated resolution, in accordance with international law and OSCE commitments, of protracted conflicts of Nagorno-Karabakh, in Georgia and the Republic of Moldova will be a particularly important issue on its agenda. The Astana Summit once again highlighted the need and the importance of achieving tangible progress in this area. We agree that this is a common responsibility of all participating States. We would like to ensure the Chairmanship-in-Office and its Special Representative for Protracted Conflicts of our full support and welcome the intention of the Chairmanship to cooperate closely with the EU. We support

the objectives set out by the Lithuanian Chairmanship concerning the specific conflicts. They deserve our full support. We agree that we should continue to work on enhancing OSCE's capacity to tackle existing and emerging conflicts. Furthermore, we also look forward to continuing the dialogue on energy security and to exploring more generally the confidence building potential of the second dimension in conflict areas.

Arms control and military confidence building is a priority area for the EU. We have repeatedly stressed that urgent progress is needed to overcome the current impasse surrounding the CFE Treaty, and are encouraged by the progress of the ongoing consultations aiming at opening the way for negotiations this year. The benefits of the CFE Treaty should be preserved in the future. We also welcome the progress achieved last year in the framework of the Forum for Security Co-operation in modernising the existing confidence and security building measures, in particular the Vienna Document 1999. We hope that a substantial update of the document will be possible this year and encourage close co-operation of activities in this regard.

We welcome the Chairmanship-in-Office's intention to address transnational threats, which is a priority area for the EU. We would particularly like to see progress in reviewing and consolidating the existing mandates, in the establishment of a coordinating function for TNTs and in the adoption of an OSCE strategic framework for policing. We look forward to further exploring the potential contribution of the OSCE to strengthening cyber security. We also support strengthening the OSCE engagement with Afghanistan, in particular in the field of border management. We agree on the particular importance of co-operating with other international organizations in combating transnational threats.

Mr Chairperson,

The EU shares the view that our community is the safest when human rights, fundamental freedoms and the rule of law are upheld. We fully support the Chairmanship's intent to make human rights and fundamental freedoms, and in particular media freedom, key priorities of this year's work and we look forward to the conference on the safety of journalists to be organised in Vilnius. The EU has consistently advocated the need to focus on the implementation of commitments, in particular in the human dimension, and ensuring more systematic follow-up to recommendations of OSCE institutions. We welcome that the Lithuanian Chairmanship shares this view and look forward to concrete progress during 2011.

Moreover, the EU reaffirms its firm support to the Office of Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media and the High Commissioner on National Minorities. We highly appreciate the commitment of the Chairperson-in-Office to support their work, autonomy and impartiality. We also commend the intention of developing a more vigorous dialogue with civil society. The EU reiterates the Chairmanship's call on all OSCE participating States to fulfil their commitments. In this respect, the EU underlines the importance of inviting ODIHR to observe elections without restrictions.

The EU attaches great importance to the work of all OSCE field operations and appreciates their important contribution in assisting participating States in the implementation of their OSCE commitments. They are rightly at the centre of your priorities. In this respect, we share the deep regret over the recent steps taken by Belarus and reiterate the call to reconsider its decision not to extend the mandate of the OSCE Office in Minsk.

In the area of effectiveness of the organization, the EU supports the practical approach of the Chairmanship. We hope that the co-operative spirit that has allowed the timely adoption of the 2011 budget of the Organisation will open the way to resolving important outstanding issues. We will also look carefully at the

issue of the legal framework, which for us is related to the actual needs faced by the OSCE in terms of operational capabilities. The EU will support the Lithuanian Chairmanship in ensuring the fairness and transparency of the selection process of a new Secretary General.

Mr Chairperson,

In Astana, OSCE Heads of State and Government have reinforced our commitments, given strategic guidance and agreed to undertake a number of specific actions tasking the Lithuanian and subsequent chairmanships with the follow-up of the Summit. Participating States should therefore be ready to work towards the achievement of these goals and not only within the OSCE. The EU has already committed itself to support the Lithuanian Chairmanship in its task. We thank the Chairmanship for sharing its intentions on the way forward. The EU remains open to continuing the informal dialogue on European security in the spirit of Corfu and welcomes the outreach towards NGOs and think-tanks.

However, in 2011, all participating States should focus on concrete action to reinforce the security in and of the OSCE area, based on the work done under the former Kazakh Chairmanship and on the proposals made in the framework of the Corfu process and in the preparation of the Astana Summit. In this context, the European Union will advance its proposals in the coming months on the basis of its already known priorities and proposals. The deliverables defined by the Chairmanship-in-Office for the Vilnius Ministerial Council meeting to a very large extent reflect these priorities. At the same time, it is important that participating States take action as soon as possible and not wait until the Ministerial Council.

Mr Chairperson,

In conclusion let me wish H.E. Audronius Ažubalis every success in his challenging task and reiterate our full support in his endeavour. We look forward to working with him and his team throughout the year.

Thank you, Mr Chairperson.

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

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

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