

**STATEMENT BY THE EUROPEAN UNION AT THE
1102nd MEETING OF THE OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

2 June 2016

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

The European Union (EU) and its Member States welcome Ambassador Kapinos for his last presentation to the Permanent Council and Mr. Dunay, Director of the OSCE Academy in Bishkek.

In our view, Central Asia should remain a priority for the OSCE, particularly in view of the development of the regional security context. We therefore regret the intention of proposing a zero-growth budget for the Centre in Bishkek, which will have a negative impact on its programmatic activities.

We support the mission's five priority areas of activity: strengthening inter-communal relations, promoting good governance and anti-corruption, combating transnational threats, promoting the protection of human rights and the rule of law, and gender equality. We appreciate the quality of the dialogue with the host country and the strengthening of dialogue with the autonomous OSCE institutions. We also encourage regional co-operation between the OSCE missions and with international organizations in the region.

The presidential elections in 2017 will be an important yardstick for measuring the progress made by Kyrgyzstan towards parliamentary democracy. We are counting on the support of the Centre in Bishkek to help the authorities to prepare for this important date and in particular to take into account the recommendations contained in the reports by the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights.

Regarding the politico-military dimension, the European Union recognizes the importance of issues connected with transnational threats and border security. The work of delimiting and demarcating the borders should continue with the aim of improving integrated border management. We would welcome increased co-ordination with the European Union on these matters and with the OSCE Office in Tajikistan and the Border Management Staff College in Dushanbe. The fight against terrorism is also an essential component of the work of the Centre in Bishkek, as is early warning and conflict prevention, particularly through "peace messengers". The involvement of youth councils is an effective way of ensuring the sustainability of these activities.

The EU once again regrets that the Kyrgyz Government has decided to discontinue the Community Security Initiative, which played an important role in improving dialogue and confidence between ethnic communities and the police in the south of the country. The EU would be interested in knowing more about the strategy to assure the continuity and sustainability of the results of this Initiative.

In the economic and environmental dimension, we support the emphasis placed on good governance and fighting corruption and money laundering. We also welcome the priority given to the management of natural resources including water as a conflict-prevention measure.

In the human dimension, which is a priority for the European Union, we urge the Centre to continue working to promote human rights and fundamental freedoms and welcome the support it provides to the Kyrgyz authorities in improving the criminal justice system. We encourage the Kyrgyz authorities to continue implementing the reforms aimed at preventing torture and concerning the prison system, areas in which the report has noted progress. We also recall the concerns raised in our statement of 28 April about the case of Asimjan Askarov. We welcome the abandonment by parliament of the draft law on foreign agents and will continue to pay close attention to the draft law on non-traditional sexual relations. The European Union also encourages the Kyrgyz authorities to remain open in their relations with the High Commissioner on National Minorities regarding the development of education reforms. Kyrgyzstan's status as a member of the United Nations Human Rights Council gives it an opportunity to demonstrate its commitment to the promotion and protection of human rights.

Mr. Chairperson,

The Academy in Bishkek enjoys an excellent reputation in the region and helps strengthen security and regional co-operation in Central Asia and with Afghanistan. We welcome the visit by the OSCE Chairperson-in-Office to Bishkek at the end of March, which allowed common ground to be found with the Kyrgyz authorities in certain areas that had been unclear and will help to safeguard the work of the Academy in the long term. Nevertheless, the mainly extrabudgetary financing of the Academy continues to put its long-term sustainability at risk. In that context, we would like to know if the Centre in Bishkek intends in the near future to suggest including a larger allocation in the Unified Budget for the Academy's activities.

We would like to emphasize that an evaluation of the specific impact of all field operations needs to be made in order to enhance their effectiveness and to assist in elaborating best practices and the sharing of experience.

Finally, we call on the Kyrgyz authorities to comply with the commitment undertaken with respect to the OSCE to exempt field mission staff from tax or to reimburse the Unified Budget for the deductions.

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

We wish Ambassador Kapinos and Mr. Dunay every success in their work.

The candidate countries the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia¹, Montenegro¹, Serbia¹ and Albania¹, the country of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidate country Bosnia and Herzegovina, and the Free Trade Association countries and members of the European Economic Area Iceland and Norway, 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.