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## **STATEMENT BY THE EUROPEAN UNION AT THE 1318th MEETING OF THE OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

3 June 2021

### **On the statement by the Co-Chairs of the OSCE Minsk Group**

The European Union welcomes the statement on 28 May by the Co-Chairs of the OSCE Minsk Group. It takes the opportunity to appeal in particular for the liberation of all prisoners of war and other detainees on the “all-for-all” principle and emphasizes the urgent obligation to treat all detainees in strict accordance with international humanitarian law. It also urges the parties to lift all restrictions on humanitarian access to the Nagorno-Karabakh region without delay and to take the required measures for the exchange of the data necessary for demining activities, including an exchange of maps showing the location of mines.

The European Union would also like express its great concern at the increase in the number of incidents at the border between Armenia and Azerbaijan over the past week. An immediate de-escalation is essential. The European Union urges the parties to show the greatest restraint, and refrain from any provocation and from any new military deployment and action on the ground and to take immediate measures to reduce tensions and prevent any risk of escalation. All forces should return to the positions occupied before 12 May, and the two parties should embark on negotiations to delimit and demarcate the borders. In that regard, the European Union urges the parties to commit themselves to the demarcation and delimitation of the border between the two countries within the framework of a negotiated process regardless of any pre-existing situation on the ground and in accordance with a formula acceptable to both parties and welcomes the assistance offered by the Co-Chairs. It is willing to provide its expertise and to offer its assistance with the delimitation and demarcation of the borders and support for the confidence-building measures required so as to make progress towards lasting peace and prosperity in the South Caucasus. It welcomes all the efforts to reduce tensions on the ground, including the proposals for a possible international observation mission.

The European Union once again echoes the call by the Minsk Group Co-Chairs for the resumption of high-level dialogue at the earliest opportunity under their aegis and for the parties to agree together the various parameters for implementation in the long term of a set of measures for stabilization, rehabilitation and the restoral of trust.

In conclusion, the European Union reiterates its full support for the mediation format of the Minsk Group and its Co-Chairs for arriving at a final comprehensive and lasting settlement. It stands ready to contribute to this, also through the European Union Special Representative for the South Caucasus.

The European Union also reiterates its support for the Special Representative of the OSCE Chairperson-in-Office and remains for its part fully committed to efforts aimed at establishing lasting peace and promoting prosperous development in the region.

The candidate countries the Republic of North Macedonia<sup>1</sup>, Montenegro<sup>1</sup>, Serbia<sup>1</sup> and Albania<sup>1</sup>, the European Free Trade Association countries and members of the European Economic Area Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway, as well as Andorra, align themselves with this statement.

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