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STATEMENT BY THE EUROPEAN UNION AT THE 1086th MEETING OF THE OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL

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In response to State Secretary Szabolcs Takács, Chair of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance and to Ambassador Felix Klein, Special Representative for Relations with Jewish Organizations

The European Union welcomes State Secretary Szabolcs Takács and Ambassador Klein to the Permanent Council. We thank the Chairmanship for organizing this discussion on the eve of International Holocaust Remembrance Day.

The main purpose of commemorations is to remind us of our duty to remember and to honour the victims. Auschwitz-Birkenau, Bergen-Belsen, Treblinka and the other death camps remain a gaping wound in our collective awareness as the locations where the intentional, planned, organized extermination of millions of Jews and other groups was put into effect by the Nazis. The experience of abasement and the denial of humanity found their ultimate expression there. We shall always remember those men, women and children who were persecuted because of their race or religion, their political beliefs, their sexual orientation or nationality – the victims of savagery.

The memory of the victims also obliges us to stay on our guard against repeating the past. It is vital to understand the logic of hatred and how swiftly it can lead to the destruction of humanity. The European Union, built as it was on the rubble of that past, established shared norms, including the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union and robust legal mechanisms for the purposes of preventing such downward spirals. The OSCE commitments on combating all forms of intolerance and on the rule of law, respect for the fundamental freedoms of every human being whatever their characteristics and dialogue with civil society are likewise firm moorings which also serve as defences to the extent that they are respected.

Today, we know the mechanisms and their consequences: the manipulation of fear, the exploitation of ignorance and stereotypes, the destructive effects of indifference, the all too easy search for collective outlets and the slow but unstoppable downward spirals of fanaticism that leads to action. Today, because of what we know, we cannot turn a blind eye to appeals to hatred, growing anti-Semitism, racism and intolerance and allow over-simplified equivalences to be put about. It is our duty to persist in condemning hate speech and to put in place powerful public policies on combating racism and discrimination. The activities of the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights in combating

anti-Semitism and intolerance and hate crimes whatever their motivation as well as in combating the exclusion of Roma populations are a valuable tool that the participating States have at their disposal. In this fight, dialogue with civil society and institutions that represent the victims of intolerance is essential. The European Union can also count on the work of the Agency for Fundamental Rights which regularly publishes data on anti-Semitism and the growth of racism in the European Union.

The European Union is closely involved in combating all forms of intolerance, be they racism, anti-Semitism, intolerance against Muslims or Christians, intolerance based on sexual orientation, or against Roma, or migrants and refugees. Familiarity with history never encourages competition among victims but rather promotes a solidarity among them that goes above and beyond the differences and strengthens the determination to defend universal human rights values. It teaches us that intolerance and hatred essentially sprout from the same seed and that we must fight them incessantly. Through our history we, the States of the OSCE and the European Union, are obliged more than ever to ensure that the ethnic, cultural, religious, political, social, geographic and other forms of diversity that make up our area remain a bounty, not a cause and instrument of conflict. You can count on our determination to ensure that this continues to inform our activities within the OSCE.

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 European Free Trade Association countries and members of the European Economic Area Iceland and Liechtenstein, as well as Ukraine, the Republic of Moldova, Georgia, Andorra and San Marino, 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.