



EUROPEAN UNION

OSCE Permanent Council No. 1228

Vienna, 16 May 2019

EU Statement in reply to the OSCE Project Co-ordinator in Uzbekistan, H.E. Ambassador John MacGregor

The European Union and its Member States warmly welcome Ambassador John MacGregor, the OSCE Project Co-ordinator in Uzbekistan back to the Permanent Council and thank him for his comprehensive report.

We appreciate the increased engagement of Uzbekistan with the OSCE and the enhanced cooperation between the host government and the OSCE Project Co-ordinator. We commend the PCUz for stepping up its efforts in all three dimensions in order to support the host country in implementing the OSCE principles and commitments hand in hand with supporting the country's reform priorities. We look forward to positive outcomes of the upcoming visit of the OSCE Chairperson-in-Office to Uzbekistan on 19 – 20 May 2019.

We welcome that the PCUz has continuously included confidence - building measures in the project agreement process with the host government and has thus contributed to the overall improved relationship between the host country and the OSCE. Could Ambassador MacGregor elaborate in more detail on this good practice?

Regarding project activities of the PCUz, we appreciate the continued focus on countering transnational threats, Information and Communication Technologies capacity building, counter-terrorism and promoting human rights-compliant policing. We welcome the cooperation with the ODIHR on the training of Uzbekistan's law enforcement officers. We value activities focusing on the role of youth in countering VERLT. We acknowledge the work on SSG/R.

In the economic and environmental dimension we welcome activities aimed at strengthening good governance and fighting corruption, money laundering and financing of terrorism. We appreciate focus on socio-economic empowerment of women. We encourage regional cooperation on water, environment and climate change.

In the human dimension, we welcome ongoing reforms in Uzbekistan and support strengthening of the national human rights framework and mechanisms in line with OSCE commitments and international obligations and standards. We appreciate the PCUz cooperation with national human rights institutions and welcome the partnership of the host country with the ODIHR, other OSCE institutions and the UN. We value the focus on advancing judicial reforms. We attach great importance to Uzbekistan's efforts to establish a national preventive mechanism against torture as soon as possible. We recall that national reform processes can be strengthened by involving civil society. We commend Uzbekistan for the active participation in the HDIM last autumn. We welcome the dialogue between Uzbekistan and the RFoM. The fact that since 10 May 2019 the access to Fergana agency and other on-line news media in Uzbekistan has been restored is a positive development.

We welcome the PCUz' support for the host country's follow-up to ODIHR's election recommendations. We commend the cooperation with the ODIHR and the Venice Commission during the process of drafting new election legislation ahead of the anticipated parliamentary elections in December 2019.

We support efforts to combat trafficking in human beings and look forward to the International Conference on the Critical Role of the Judiciary in Combating Trafficking in Human Beings, which will be held in Tashkent in November 2019.

We appreciate the PCUz activities aimed at promoting gender equality and the cooperation with Ambassador Melanne Vermeer, Special Representative of the OSCE Chairmanship on Gender, who travelled to Uzbekistan in November 2018. The report of her visit contains valuable recommendations how to increase women's active participation across all three dimensions. We encourage a follow-up to these recommendations.

We welcome that the PCUz has revitalized channels of communication with neighbouring OSCE field operations in Central Asia. We reiterate the importance of regional cooperation and approaches, also involving Afghanistan, and support regional co-ordination formats. Could Ambassador MacGregor elaborate in more detail on how the PCUz supports regional cooperation and coordination?

We acknowledge the increased demand for project activities of the PCUz. We recall that the 2019 Unified Budget allocates additional human and financial resources to the PCUz programmatic work. We commend the PCUz for focusing on areas where it can provide maximum impact and added value. We appreciate the tremendous efforts of the highly qualified, experienced and committed national staff. We invite Uzbekistan to consider abandoning the limits set on the number of international staff.

Uzbekistan is a significant partner of the European Union. The implementation of reforms by Uzbekistan has opened prospects for further deepening of our bilateral relations. The first round of negotiations on the Enhanced Partnership and Cooperation Agreement (EPCA) was held in Tashkent in February 2019, and we look forward to the next round in June. The EU supports the ongoing reforms in Uzbekistan, in particular the steps towards democratization, protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms, strengthening market economy and good governance. We attach great importance to the security, stability and prosperity of Uzbekistan and the whole region, including Afghanistan. We welcome the new dynamics in regional cooperation. The EU supports regional dialogue and cooperation on environment, water and climate change, which was in the focus of the 6th EU – Central Asia High Level Conference on Environment and Water Cooperation in Tashkent in January 2019.

In conclusion the EU would like to ensure Ambassador MacGregor about our continued support for the OSCE Project Co-ordinator's activities and thank him and his able team for their dedicated work.

The Candidate Countries NORTH MACEDONIA*, MONTENEGRO*, SERBIA* and ALBANIA*, the Country of the Stabilisation and Association Process and Potential Candidate BOSNIA and HERZEGOVINA, and the EFTA countries ICELAND and LIECHTENSTEIN, members of the European Economic Area, as well as UKRAINE, the REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA and GEORGIA align themselves with this statement.

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