

**EUROPEAN UNION****OSCE Permanent Council N° 1174
Vienna, 1 February 2018**

**EU Statement in Response to the Presentations by the
Chairs of the Three Committees**

The European Union thanks the Chairs of the Three Committees for presenting the respective work programmes for this year.

We welcome Ambassador Gonzalez Roman in her new capacity as Chair of the Security Committee. Our priority remains the implementation of the OSCE's Ministerial commitments relating to transnational threats, through a comprehensive approach and in close co-operation with other international stakeholders. We should build on efforts undertaken so far to prevent and counter violent extremism and radicalisation that lead to terrorism, to enhance cyber/ICT security and to promote the participation of women in the security sector.

We support the overarching priority outlined by Ambassador Gonzalez Roman and in line with the priorities of the Italian Chairmanship of illicit trafficking and its links to organised crime and terrorism as well as to the introduction of new topics or approaches such as the illicit trafficking of cultural heritage, the risk of weapons of mass destruction and hazardous materials falling in the hands of terrorists or criminal groups, the emphasis on border security and information sharing linked to the return of Foreign Terrorist Fighters, as well as the importance of private sector involvement in enhancing cyber security and of the implementation of existing confidence building measures. We value the Security Committee meetings as an opportunity to discuss OSCE-specific tools and expertise to address transnational threats, such as border management and police cooperation. We support an operational focus and the mainstreaming of human rights as we are convinced that our efforts will only be effective if we uphold human rights and democracy and the rule of law.

We thank Ambassador Sarybay for the work done in 2017 and for presenting an outline of the planned work in the Economic and Environmental Committee this year. We look forward to continuing our work on the security aspects of important economy-, environment-, and energy-related topics and welcome that aspects of good governance, connectivity and energy efficiency will feature on our work plan also in 2018. We are pleased to see that the agenda will also allow us to build upon the Ministerial Council decision on Economic Participation that we agreed upon at the last Ministerial Council in Vienna. The Second Dimension is an integral part of the comprehensive security approach of the OSCE and can contribute in many ways to conflict prevention and confidence building. We look forward to discussing, in particular also with representatives from OSCE field operations, how this potential can be maximised.

We would like to thank Ambassador MacLeod for the work done as Chair of the Human Dimension Committee during the past year and welcome that she will continue in this capacity in 2018. The Human Dimension should remain at the forefront of our work. We welcome the planned approach to the organisation of the Committee meetings this year, in particular the focus on the fundamental freedoms of expression, association and assembly, religion or belief. Continuing discussions on tackling hate crime is for sure needed. We also see merit in dedicating a meeting to Roma and Sinti issues, in light of the forthcoming third status report on the implementation of the OSCE Action Plan on Roma and Sinti Issues foreseen for 2018. Considering the continued discussions in the past years with a view of strengthening of the OSCE commitments as well as the work of OSCE institutions and field missions, we suggest including also torture prevention among the topics to be addressed during the year.

We welcome the intention of the Security and Human Rights Committee Chairs to mainstream gender equality throughout the work of their Committees and we encourage a similar approach in the Second Dimension. We appreciate all efforts aimed at increasing the involvement of the Partners for Cooperation in the work of the Committees.

We have appreciated the involvement of a broad range of stakeholders in the work of the three Committees during last year, particularly by inviting speakers from civil society, the private sector, autonomous institutions and field missions and we welcome that this practice will continue this year. We also valued the Committees' cross dimensional approach to Combatting Trafficking of Human Beings and on Women, Peace and Security last year and hope that this practice will continue in 2018.

We also appreciate the continued practice of voluntary reporting in the HDC and SC and also welcome the initiative for more structured sharing of experiences and best practices on national policies in the EEC. We thank those participating States that made efforts and presented voluntary reports and encourage others to make use of this agenda item and share their experience in 2018.

In concluding, I wish to express the full support of the European Union and its Member States to the important work that Ambassadors Gonzalez Roman, Sarybay and MacLeod will conduct in the three dimensions this year. We wish them every success and we stand ready to support and contribute to the work of the Three Committees.

The Candidate Countries the FORMER YUGOSLAV REPUBLIC OF 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, GEORGIA, ANDORRA and SAN MARINO align themselves with this statement.

* The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Albania continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.