



EUROPEAN UNION

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EU Statement in response to the address by the CiO of the OSCE, Prime Minister and Minister for Europe and Foreign Affairs of Albania, H.E. Mr. Edi Rama

The European Union warmly welcomes Prime Minister and Minister for Europe and Foreign Affairs of Albania, H.E. Edi Rama to the Permanent Council. We thank you for presenting the priorities of the Albanian OSCE chairmanship in 2020 and we very much appreciate Albania's readiness to assume the responsibility of chairing the Organization at a challenging time. As a candidate country, which fully aligns with the Common Foreign and Security Policy, Albania is very close to the EU. We are very much looking forward to working with you as OSCE Chair. We are also grateful to Sweden and Poland for taking on the responsibility of the chairmanship for 2021 and 2022. The fact that we have the three upcoming chairmanships settled serves well the continuity of the work of the OSCE.

First of all, we want to once again express our sincere condolences for the many victims of the earthquake that has hit your country last November. We have tried to help with search and rescue operations, post-disaster assessment of damages and coordinating donor efforts. Ursula von der Leyen, President of the European Commission, announced that the EU will support the Albanian people with €15 million following the devastating earthquake. We look forward to the donors' conference to help Albania with the reconstruction.

You indicated that the vision of your chairmanship is guided by the important objective of "implementing together, in good faith, the encompassing set of our

political commitments”. We fully share this objective as we need to restore respect for OSCE principles and commitments as enshrined in the Helsinki Final Act and the Paris Charter.

In this connection, you rightly said that “the crisis in and around Ukraine remains the most pressing security challenge in Europe”. We welcome that the resolution of this conflict is at the top of your agenda and we appreciate that your first visit as CiO will be to the SMM and Ukraine. Our position on Russia’s acts of aggression against Ukraine and the illegal annexation of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the City of Sevastopol, which we strongly condemn and do not recognize, is well known. These acts pose a severe challenge to European security and has demonstrated the dangerous consequences that follow when fundamental OSCE principles and commitments are violated.

A sustainable political solution to this conflict is a top priority for the EU. Such a solution must restore respect for Ukraine’s sovereignty, independence, unity and territorial integrity within its internationally recognized borders. The full implementation of the Minsk Agreements is paramount in this regard, as well as unconditional respect of the ceasefire and full, safe, unconditional and unhindered access for the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission throughout Ukraine. We welcome the recent positive developments on the ground in Ukraine and the continued international diplomatic efforts within the Trilateral Contact Group and the Normandy format. The Normandy Four summit on 9 December in Paris brings hope for improved and result-oriented increased dialogue. The ceasefire remains to be fully implemented and access of SMM monitors should be unrestricted.

Protracted conflicts pose a very serious threat to the security of the entire OSCE area. The status quo is detrimental to security. The resolution of the existing conflicts in the OSCE area remains a priority for the EU and our position is well known. The EU remains committed in its support to the territorial integrity, independence and sovereignty of all OSCE participating States. The EU supports the existing formats of

negotiations and calls on all actors involved to demonstrate commitment to conflict settlement. The EU will continue to promote and support confidence building measures to assist the resolution of these conflicts, in co-operation with the OSCE and other relevant interlocutors. In this context we welcome the appointment of Ambassador Thomas Mayr-Harting as Special Representative for the Transdniestrian Settlement Process.

We fully support the autonomous institutions and their mandates and the OSCE field operations from the Western Balkans to Central Asia, which play a crucial role in helping with the implementation of the OSCE commitments and truly “make a difference on the ground”, contributing to the objectives of Albania’s Chairmanship programme.

The OSCE’s comprehensive concept of security highlights the vital role of the human dimension, and in particular the importance of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms for our common security. We have made great strides in advancing human rights and fundamental freedoms thanks to our organization and its principles and commitments. And yet, still today, we need to urgently address the backsliding on human rights and fundamental freedoms, the ongoing and increasing restrictions on civil society and independent media, the growing pressure on human rights defenders and the growing intolerance in the OSCE area. These worrying trends represent serious challenges to our common security. Lasting security cannot be sustained without respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, democracy and the rule of law. Our OSCE commitments are more relevant than ever and we call on all participating States to double their focus on their implementation. In this context, we welcome that your priorities will include promotion of freedom of expression and media freedom, as well as tolerance and non-discrimination.

We fully share your priority of combating violence against women and promoting the role of women in peace and security. Gender mainstreaming throughout our activities should remain a priority. The findings of the OSCE led survey on the well-being and

safety of women in the OSCE area are shocking and we need to follow up on its recommendations. The 20th anniversary this year of UNSCR 1325 (2000) is an opportunity to reaffirm our commitments to its full implementation and to pledge further specific actions within the OSCE. To this end, we reiterate the call for an OSCE-wide action plan on Women, Peace and Security.

We welcome your stated objective to strengthen dialogue within the Organization also by promoting existing CSBMs and arms control regimes to increase trust and lay the groundwork for further OSCE achievements. We once again emphasize the obligation of all pS to fully implement the existing commitments in the politico-military area in letter and spirit. We deeply regret that at the Bratislava MC consensus on the Declaration on the implementation and modernisation of the Vienna Document could not be reached. It is vital to modernise our OSCE politico-military toolbox, most notably the Vienna Document, in order to increase military stability, transparency and predictability. We remain convinced that this would bring greater long-term security for all participating States. We highly value and actively support the Structured Dialogue, which we are ready to develop further in accordance with the Hamburg Declaration, as a transparent, inclusive, state-owned and –driven confidence-building process, without predetermined outcome and of high relevance for the EU. We continue to see the Structured Dialogue as a meaningful platform for in-depth exchanges on current and future challenges and risks to security in the OSCE area. It is important that participating States work together towards creating an environment conducive to reinvigorating Conventional Arms Control and CSBMs, as we all agreed in the Hamburg Declaration.

Our efforts to prevent and counter transnational threats will only be effective if we uphold human rights and the rule of law. Developing effective State institutions, rule of law mechanisms, functioning police, borders and customs services as well as independent and efficient judiciaries will lead to multiple benefits in preventing and countering transnational threats such as terrorism and, as you rightly indicate,

organized crime and trafficking in its various manifestations including trafficking in human beings. In other words, a well-functioning security sector with strong democratic oversight is key. The important work carried out over the past year on preventing and countering terrorism, as well as on border security and management provides a solid basis for further engagement this year.

We reaffirm the importance we attach to our cooperation on economic and environmental issues as an important element of the OSCE's comprehensive approach to security. We support your intention to ensure a balance between economic and environmental activities. We deeply regret that in Bratislava participating States could not reach consensus on a text dealing with transnational organized crime which damages the environment, which deserves further consideration.

We also support the planned focus of your Chairmanship on fighting corruption and we look forward to continuing to work towards our common goal to prevent and combat corruption in all its forms and at all levels for the benefit of our societies and economies. We are convinced that efforts to prevent and combat this global phenomenon must be stepped up. In this vein we appreciate that this year's Economic and Environmental Forum will focus on preventing and combating corruption through innovation, increased transparency and digitalization.

The challenges we face go beyond the borders of our Organization and we concur with you that the security of the OSCE area is inextricably linked to that of the Mediterranean region, as reaffirmed by Ministers in Milan in 2018. We underline the importance of following a comprehensive approach, including through strengthened cooperation with Mediterranean and Asian partner countries, which should remain a priority. We congratulate Albania for its successful chairing of the Mediterranean Contact Group last year and welcome the decision on renaming the Contact Groups

to “OSCE Asian Partners for Co-operation Group” and “OSCE Mediterranean Partners for Co-operation Group” respectively.

We appreciate that your Chairmanship will pay attention to youth in peace and security across all three dimensions. Albania has played an important role during the establishment of the Regional Youth Cooperation Office (RYCO), and has thus demonstrated its willingness to improve the situation of youth and human connectivity throughout the Western Balkans.

As for the immediate priorities you mention, we cannot agree more with you on the need for a swift adoption of the 2020 unified budget as the functioning of the OSCE needs to be ensured. In addition, an agreement on new scales of contributions would be an important step to reinforce the governance and credibility of our Organisation. We reiterate our commitment to the indispensable improvement of burden-sharing among participating States. We look forward to reaching consensus on these issues as soon as possible.

We support your efforts to find a swift and timely consensual solution to the appointment of the OSCE’s four top positions through an open, transparent and inclusive process.

As you know, we are working for peace, stability and prosperity in the Western Balkans. We use this opportunity to mention that, the EU remains committed to the European perspective of the Western Balkans and is determined to strengthen and intensify its engagement at all levels to support the Western Balkan’s political, economic and social transformation.

Mr. Prime Minister, your chairmanship coincides with the 45th anniversary of the Helsinki Final Act and the 30th anniversary of the Charter of Paris for a New Europe. Rebuilding trust by restoring respect or the principles enshrined in these founding documents is the most important task at hand. For this you can count on the

convinced support of the EU and its MS. We wish you all the best in the important and challenging work that lies ahead.

The Candidate Countries REPUBLIC of NORTH MACEDONIA* and MONTENEGRO*, 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.

* Republic of North Macedonia and Montenegro continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.