



**EUROPEAN UNION**

**OSCE Special Permanent Council N°1127  
Vienna, 12 January 2017**

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**EU Statement in Response to H.E. Sebastian Kurz, Minister  
for Europe, Integration and Foreign Affairs of Austria**

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The European Union and its Member States warmly welcome Foreign Minister Kurz to the Permanent Council. Mr. Minister, the OSCE is a cornerstone of European security. We greatly appreciate Austria's readiness to assume the responsibility for leading the OSCE. As we said when you first came here last year, you can count on our full and active support.

Mr. Minister, we welcome that, in your new capacity, you first visited the conflict zone in eastern Ukraine. This is a clear reminder that the ongoing crisis in and around Ukraine remains at the top of the OSCE agenda. Russia's illegal annexation of Crimea and Sevastopol, which we will not recognise, and its aggressive and destabilising actions in eastern Ukraine, continues to violate the basic principles and commitments of the OSCE as enshrined notably in the Helsinki Final Act and the Paris Charter, constituting the basis of the European security order. Respect for these fundamental principles and commitments must be restored. We fully share your call for the full implementation of the Minsk agreements, unconditional respect of the ceasefire and full, safe and unhindered access for the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission throughout Ukraine. With the security situation along the line of contact still fragile, these are important steps toward a sustainable political solution, which upholds respect for Ukraine's sovereignty, independence, unity and territorial integrity within its internationally recognised borders and in line with OSCE principles and commitments. We strongly support the efforts in the Normandy format to reach such a solution and welcome the extension of the mandate of Ambassador Sajdik as Special Representative, allowing him to continue his crucial work in the Trilateral Contact Group. We reiterate our call on the sides in the Trilateral Contact Group and its working groups to agree on steps toward the full implementation of the Minsk

agreements. We reaffirm our strong support for the SMM and call for a timely extension of the mission's current mandate and the provision of necessary resources. We also support the prolongation of the OSCE Observer Mission at the Russian Checkpoints Gukovo and Donetsk.

Mr. Minister, we support your focus on the resolution of the protracted conflicts in the Republic of Moldova and Georgia and of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, which remains a top priority for the European Union. We agree that the OSCE's capabilities across the conflict cycle should be strengthened as appropriate and we hope that the valuable work done under the German Chairmanship can be put as much as possible to practical use.

As you very well stated, the human dimension of security is of prime importance within the OSCE's comprehensive approach to security and must remain a cornerstone of our work. We continue to be concerned about attempts to weaken existing OSCE commitments or limit OSCE activities in the area of human rights. Increasing restrictions on civil society and crackdown in human rights and fundamental freedoms in parts of the OSCE region are of primary concern for us and deserve attention of the entire OSCE community. Our OSCE commitments are as relevant as ever and we call on all participating States to live up to them and reverse existing violations. We reiterate the importance we attach to the involvement of civil society in our work. We also welcome the focus on gender, and we reiterate the need to mainstream the gender perspective across all OSCE activities.

We furthermore welcome your focus on conventional arms control and confidence and security building measures. We remain committed to the full implementation of the existing commitments in the politico-military area and believe that our work on the modernisation of these instruments, including the Vienna Document, must continue. We welcome launching a structured dialogue on the current and future challenges and risks in the OSCE area and look forward to working together with the Austrian Chairmanship as well as the FSC Chairs to this end.

We agree with your call to focus on counter-terrorism activities and in particular countering and preventing violent extremism and radicalisation leading to terrorism, while respecting human rights, fundamental freedoms and the rule of law. Working with youth is essential to this end and we welcome your focus on this. Cyber threats

have increasingly challenged our security and this issue is, more than ever, a priority for the OSCE for the year to come. We want to emphasise the importance of cyber security in terms of reducing the risks of conflict, while stressing that cyber technology may also be a means to enhance human rights and fundamental freedoms.

We welcome a focus on good governance and connectivity, and environmental and climate-related issues, energy security and the protection of energy networks, as it brings together a number of relevant issues to security and stability in the OSCE area.

Throughout 2016 we have appreciated the focus of the Austrian Chair of the Mediterranean Contact Group on interests and challenges the OSCE area shares with its Southern partners. The Mediterranean region, and strengthening cooperation with all OSCE Partners for Co-operation, should remain a priority. The OSCE Mediterranean Conference in October last year has confirmed the relevance of youth in the security context, particularly when dealing with issues such as preventing radicalisation, and migration. We cannot waste the great potential of youth in the creation of democratic and inclusive societies.

Mr Chairperson, the European Union stresses its strong support for the OSCE autonomous institutions, the OSCE field missions and the Secretariat. We reiterate our deep appreciation for the work of ODIHR, the RFoM and the HCNM and our unwavering support for their strong and flexible mandates. Their ability to carry out these mandates and support participating States in the implementation of their commitments must be preserved. We know that new holders of these offices will have to be appointed under your watch. We believe these are extremely important positions, and we will support you in finding consensus.

We deeply deplore the situation that made it impossible to prolong in time the mandates of the OSCE field missions in Armenia, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. Undue pressure on other participating States, as well as a blockade of decisions unrelated, are equally unacceptable, and we call on the participating States concerned to return to a constructive approach.

We also need a budget to be adopted as soon as possible. We should maintain the momentum created last year regarding the reform of the scales of contributions based on economic and budgetary realities, as the participating States need to deliver before the current scales expire at the end of the year. And finally, working on the issue of the lack of an OSCE legal personality should be pursued as it continues to lead to serious operational concerns.

In conclusion, we look forward to working with you to preserve and strengthen the OSCE acquis of commitments and principles and the Organization itself on the basis of the comprehensive concept of security. You can count on the European Union's support in these endeavours. These are challenging times. We wish you and your teams, the Permanent Mission and the Chairmanship Task-Force, courage and patience, and of course success.

The Candidate Countries the FORMER YUGOSLAV REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA\*, MONTENEGRO\* and ALBANIA\*, the Country of the Stabilisation and Association Process and Potential Candidate BOSNIA and HERZEGOVINA, as well as UKRAINE, ANDORRA and SAN MARINO align themselves with this statement.

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