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## **STATEMENT BY THE EUROPEAN UNION AT THE 971st MEETING OF THE OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

14 November 2013

### **In response to the Co-Chairmen of the Minsk Group and the Personal Representative of the OSCE Chairperson-in-Office on the Conflict Dealt with by the OSCE Minsk Conference**

The European Union (EU) welcomes the Co-Chairmen of the Minsk Group and the Personal Representative of the Chairperson-in-Office on the Conflict Dealt with by the Minsk Conference and thanks them for their detailed reports.

The EU takes this opportunity to reiterate its commitment to the Minsk Group and restates its full confidence in the ability of the Co-Chairmen to advance the search for a fair and lasting political settlement of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, which it regards as vital for the future of the region. We call upon the parties to focus their attention on seeking a constructive dialogue and encourage them to take greater advantage of the efforts undertaken by the Co-Chairmen.

The EU reiterates its support for all the principles, without exception, proposed by the Presidents of the French Republic, the United States of America and the Russian Federation in their joint statements at the L'Aquila Summit in 2009 and the Muskoka Summit in 2010, statements that were favourably received by the Armenian and Azerbaijani authorities. The EU also reiterates its support for the statements of the three Presidents at Deauville on 26 May 2011, Los Cabos on 19 June 2012 and Lough Erne on 18 June 2013, appealing to all the parties to the conflict to take a decisive step towards a peaceful settlement and to progress beyond the unacceptable status quo, condemning the use of force and stressing the need to prepare the populations for peace.

In this connection, the EU recalls the commitment made by the Presidents of Armenia and Azerbaijan at the Sochi Summit on 23 January 2012 to accelerate reaching an agreement on the Basic Principles for a Settlement of the Nagorno-Karabakh Conflict. It regrets that no substantial progress has been made in the negotiations since the Sochi Summit and that new tensions have arisen in the settlement process.

The EU welcomes in this regard the intention of the two Presidents to meet at a summit again this month to clarify their positions and discuss the way forward. The EU fully supports the initiatives of the Co-Chairmen of the Minsk Group aimed at continuing the dialogue with the parties to reduce tension and advance the peace process.

The EU fully shares the view of the Co-Chairmen regarding the need to significantly improve the atmosphere of the negotiations, to increase confidence and to reinforce the implementation of the ceasefire so that further progress can be made towards a peaceful settlement. In this context, it regrets that despite the efforts of the Co-Chairmen to put in place a mechanism for investigating incidents along the front line, this commitment by the parties, which was reiterated in Sochi, has not yet been fulfilled.

The EU emphasizes the importance of the development of humanitarian contacts and contacts between civil society representatives to which the Presidents of Armenia and Azerbaijan committed themselves. In this context, it supports the efforts of the Co-Chairmen of the Minsk Group and their appeal to the parties to use these contacts to improve mutual understanding in the region and to refrain from all political instrumentalization.

The EU is willing to provide increased support for the efforts to settle the conflict through the development and establishment of confidence-building measures, in support of and in full complementarity with the Minsk Group, with the aim of facilitating the next stages of the implementation of a peaceful resolution.

Mr. Chairperson,

We should like to express our appreciation for the work of the Personal Representative of the Chairperson-in-Office on the Conflict Dealt with by the Minsk Conference, Ambassador Andrzej Kasprzyk, and his team, at times under difficult security conditions. The EU attaches the highest importance to the unhindered pursuit of their ceasefire monitoring activities on the line of contact and along the border between Armenia and Azerbaijan. These activities undoubtedly contribute to reducing tensions in the region and are a valuable tool for implementing confidence-building measures on the ground.

The EU wishes to express, in this respect, its concern about the incident of 17 October, which led to the cancellation of a monitoring mission along the southern part of the line of contact. It believes, like the Co-Chairmen of the Minsk Group, that this regrettable incident undermines the work of the Personal Representative and his team and of those working to facilitate the monitoring activities, as well as the ceasefire agreement of May 1994.

The EU welcomes the continuing increase in the number of front-line monitoring missions by the Personal Representative and his team and appreciates the significant effort this involves. We welcome the participation of members of the High-Level Planning Group in the monitoring missions this year and we encourage their increased participation in the future. We appreciate the contribution that Ambassador Kasprzyk will be able to make at the appropriate time to implementing the mechanism for investigating incidents along the front line.

The EU remains deeply concerned by reports of recurring armed incidents along the front line and the continued high number of deaths. We condemn any use of force and call on the parties concerned to avoid any actions likely to fuel tensions. To that end, we call on both parties to adhere scrupulously to the ceasefire to which they have committed themselves, to end the incursions on both sides of the line of contact, and to exercise restraint both on the ground and in their public statements. The EU appeals to the parties to make additional efforts and increase confidence-building measures to reinforce the ceasefire.

In conclusion, the EU renews its full support for the endeavours of the Co-Chairmen of the Minsk Group to mediate as well as for Ambassador Kasprzyk's activities. The EU also reiterates its determination to work closely with the parties on promoting stability and prosperity as well as consolidating democracy and the rule of law in the region, and reinforcing its co-operative relations with the parties, particularly within the Eastern Partnership.

The candidate countries the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia<sup>1</sup>, Montenegro<sup>1</sup>, Iceland<sup>2</sup> and Serbia<sup>1</sup>, the countries of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidate countries Albania and Bosnia and Herzegovina, and the European Free Trade Association countries Liechtenstein and Norway, align themselves with this statement.

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1 The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.

2 Iceland continues to be a member of the European Free Trade Association.