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**STATEMENT BY  
THE EUROPEAN UNION AT THE 1423rd MEETING OF THE  
OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

18 May 2023

**On the occasion of the  
International Day against Homophobia, Transphobia and Biphobia**

On 17 May, we celebrated the International Day against Homophobia, Transphobia and Biphobia. In that context, the European Union pays tribute to human diversity in all its richness and to the right of every individual to be proud of who they are, to define their own identity and to love the person they choose, reflecting the theme of this year's International Day, "Together always: united in diversity".

We remain deeply concerned by the particularly tragic impact of Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine on people in vulnerable situations, including lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTI) persons, as described in several reports under the OSCE Moscow Mechanism. LGBTI persons are particularly at risk in armed conflict or humanitarian emergencies. We emphasize the importance of protecting the safety, physical integrity, dignity, human rights and fundamental freedoms of all those fleeing the conflict, regardless of their sexual orientation or gender identity.

We share the concerns expressed by the Moscow Mechanism rapporteur last year regarding the "constant pressure" exerted on LGBTI persons in Russia. We are particularly worried about the impact of the law banning the promotion of so-called "non-traditional" relationships, which entered into force last year, and the development of a highly aggressive political discourse describing LGBTI persons as a threat to the country. The situation of LGBTI persons in Chechnya also remains extremely worrying. We again urge the local and federal authorities in Russia to conduct a prompt, transparent and thorough investigation into all violence against LGBTI persons and to ensure that those responsible are brought to justice in accordance with the recommendations of the report prepared in 2018 under the Moscow Mechanism, endorsed in the last Moscow Mechanism report on Russia.

The European Union is deeply concerned about the rise in manifestations of intolerance and discrimination, including online manifestations, towards LGBTI persons. It is unacceptable for the human rights of LGBTI persons to continue to be violated throughout the world on the basis of real or supposed sexual orientation and gender identity and for sexual relations between persons of the same gender still to be penalized in some OSCE participating States. There is no justification for suppressing or changing sexual orientation and gender identity.

We pay homage to the civil society organizations and defenders of the human rights of LGBTI persons, who work closely with victims of violence and discrimination, often under particularly difficult circumstances. Violence and reprisals against them are unacceptable.

We welcome the contribution of the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) in supporting civil society organizations working to promote mutual respect and to combat intolerance and discrimination, including hate crimes. We urge the ODIHR, the other autonomous institutions, the field operations and the Secretariat to step up their co-operation in that regard and to intensify their relations with civil society organizations.

We shall continue to take action on multilateral platforms such as the United Nations to protect the rights of LGBTI persons.

In closing, we reiterate our commitment to the promotion and defence of the universality of human rights and emphatically reaffirm that LGBTI persons have the same rights as all other individuals.

The candidate countries North Macedonia<sup>1</sup>, Montenegro<sup>1</sup>, Serbia<sup>1</sup>, Albania<sup>1</sup>, Ukraine, the Republic of Moldova and Bosnia and Herzegovina<sup>1</sup>; as well as Andorra and San Marino, align themselves with this statement.

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<sup>1</sup> North Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia, Albania and Bosnia and Herzegovina continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.