



EUROPEAN UNION

**OSCE Permanent Council N° 1189
Vienna, 14 June 2018**

**EU Statement in response to the Report by the Head of the
OSCE Center in Ashgabat, Amb. Natalya Drozd**

The European Union welcomes Ambassador Natalya Drozd to the Permanent Council and thanks her for the comprehensive report.

Turkmenistan remains an important partner in the EU's overall relations with Central Asia, including in the context of the current and new 2019 EU Strategy for Central Asia, currently under preparation. We welcome the fact that the European vector occupies an important place in the Foreign Policy concept of Turkmenistan. We continue to follow developments in Turkmenistan and we look forward to continuing our cooperation and further development of a mutually beneficial partnership.

The EU attaches great importance to the work of the Centre in Ashgabat, which remains key in supporting the implementation by Turkmenistan of all its OSCE-related commitments. We are pleased to hear that Turkmenistan is continuously increasing its interest to further cooperate with the OSCE and about an enhanced engagement between the Centre and the host country, leading to exploring additional areas for possible project activities. We would like to hear more on this as we always encourage a deepening of activities in all three dimensions. We welcome the cooperation with other OSCE and international actors in planning and implementing programmatic activities as well as maintaining a regional outlook.

In the first dimension, we support the continued focus on border security and management, including the creation of an Advance Passenger Information system and travel document security. The Border Management Staff College remains a key OSCE asset in sustaining related efforts. We particularly welcome the emphasis on enhancing border-patrolling, also encouraging further engaging of Afghan officials, a commendable approach in the interest of a stable, secure and prosperous region.

We encourage the new emphasis on VERLT and cyber security and we would welcome more detail regarding the priority-working outlook on these topics.

In the second dimension, we support the focus on good governance, which, together with strengthening the rule of law and the independence of judiciary, enhance sustainable development and economic growth. Activities such as the recent OSCE-supported regional conference in Ashgabat on Good Governance and Economic Connectivity illustrate a contribution the Centre can make also in a regional context including Afghanistan. We support continued work on energy security and implementation of the Aarhus Convention and would welcome more information on the Centre's expanded work on trade and transport management.

Adherence to the principles of rule of law and human rights is an essential element of the EU – Turkmenistan cooperation. The EU remains concerned about the serious shortcomings in human rights and fundamental freedoms in Turkmenistan. We continue to support an enhanced work in the third dimension supporting the implementation of OSCE principles and commitments in the area of human rights and fundamental freedoms, as well as those in support of civil society, an area where the OSCE can provide maximum impact. We welcome and further encourage the Centre's cooperation with the RFoM and ODIHR and look forward to the HCNM's planned visit to Turkmenistan.

We support the Centre's continued focus on assisting the Ombudsperson with a view to an effective and efficient delivery of her mandate, and on enhancing the implementation of the National Action Plan on Human Rights. There is still a major gap between the legislative framework adopted by Turkmenistan in previous years and its practical implementation. We would like to enquire about the potential of broadening even more the OSCE's related assistance. We welcome that further development of the electoral legal framework and practices remains in focus and we call on Turkmenistan to implement recommendations included in the Final Reports of the latest and previous ODIHR's Election Assessment Missions.

We continue to consider work in the area of penitentiary reform, including with the view of ensuring international standards related to prisoners' rights, to be a priority and we encourage the Centre to request the authorities to continue visiting detention

facilities. We reiterate our strong call on Turkmenistan to immediately and effectively acknowledge the problem of enforced disappearances, take action and provide information on outstanding cases and to eradicate this problem and we look forward to continuing our dialogue on this and other matters during the upcoming EU – Turkmenistan Human Rights Dialogue on 21 June 2018.

We support the Centre continuing its activities with regard to media, in particular towards media freedom, media pluralism, editorial independence and online journalism. We welcome focused activities such as providing expertise in the process of drafting of the Law of Turkmenistan on Television and Radio Broadcasting. We echo the RFoM call on 27 March 2018 on the authorities of Turkmenistan to take measures supporting a pluralistic media landscape and freedom of expression. Freedom of religion or belief, gender equality and mainstreaming, combating trafficking in human beings and combating domestic violence remain important areas of further work.

In conclusion, we would like to wish success to Ambassador Drozd and her team in their work and recall our support to the activity of the Centre and of the OSCE field activities in Central Asia.

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, LIECHTENSTEIN and NORWAY, members of the European Economic Area, 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.