

**EUROPEAN UNION****OSCE Permanent Council No 1005
Vienna, 19 June 2014**

**EU Statement in response to the Head of the OSCE Office
in Yerevan, H.E. Ambassador Andrey Sorokin**

The European Union and its Member States warmly welcome Ambassador Sorokin to the Permanent Council and thank him for his report. We support the Office's activities in assisting Armenia to implement its OSCE commitments throughout all three dimensions and are pleased to note that the Office continues to enjoy good cooperation with the Government and with civil society.

We recognise the benefit of the good relationship between the Office and the police force and the role this plays in helping modernise the service. The assistance provided by the Office in developing democratic policing practices appears to be having an impact, with the community policing initiative being rolled out across the country. The opinion poll commissioned by the Office on this initiative is a useful tool in helping judge the positive impact that the projects are making. There is of course more work still to be done, including further development on improving police-public partnership and ensuring that gender equality in the police force is not just a matter of numbers.

We also continue to support the Office's work, in cooperation with OSCE/ODIHR, on reforming the judiciary and the criminal justice system to ensure transparent and inclusive law making, which complements considerable EU support in this area. We also strongly support the Office's work on good governance and the fight against corruption. In particular we welcome the Office's assistance to the guillotine project.

We welcome the support given by the Office to both the Central Election Commission and civil society during the 2013 Presidential election. We agree with the Ambassador that this is part of an ongoing process to assist the Government of Armenia better meet its commitments on holding elections in line

with International Standards. We therefore encourage the Office to continue to work closely with the Government and civil society to address areas of concern, particularly those raised in the 2013 ODIHR Election Observation Mission report.

We welcome the work of the Office in helping improve Human Rights related issues including in the area of media freedom. However, reform of Armenia's broadcast legislation is still lagging and disappointingly this has shown no improvement. Whilst this is not within the Office's control, it would be useful to hear how you plan to support the Government in implementing the RFoM's recommendations in this respect? We are also concerned by a number of cases of harassment and attacks against journalists, and we also noted your expressed concern with regards to violations of the right to peaceful assembly, harassment, and undue pressure on the demonstrators during street protests in Yerevan last year. We are concerned about recent attacks and the harassment of human rights defenders, and we encourage the Armenian authorities to make use of the recently published ODIHR Guidelines on Human Rights Defenders.

Some of the projects and activities run by the Office seem to be development related with a debatable link to security. While not necessarily disputing the value of this work in its broad context, we have to ask ourselves whether the OSCE is the appropriate donor in all cases.

We note the Ambassador's comments regarding secondments and resources. In a challenging resource climate, OSCE operations need to be leaner and sharper in fulfilling their mandate effectively. This may include the necessity to reprioritise and improve the focus of the programmatic structures and activities of Field Operations. We would encourage the office to make full use of the OSCE Evaluation Framework for next year's PBPR, in order that a better measurement of impact can be made. There is still a focus in the PBPR on quantitative rather than qualitative data as evidence of the success of projects and activity. An indication of how activities have led to specific positive changes would be more helpful and we would urge you to include this in next year's report.

In conclusion, we would like to thank Ambassador Sorokin and his team for their work and wish them all the best for their future endeavours.

The Candidate Countries the FORMER YUGOSLAV REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA*, MONTENEGRO*, ICELAND+ and SERBIA*, and the Countries of the Stabilisation and Association Process and Potential Candidates ALBANIA and BOSNIA and HERZEGOVINA, as well as UKRAINE align themselves with this statement.

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

+ Iceland continues to be a member of the EFTA and of the European Economic Area.