



EUROPEAN UNION

OSCE Permanent Council Nr 1002 Vienna, 29 May 2014

EU Statement in Response to the Report by the Head of the OSCE Centre in Ashgabat, H.E. Ambassador Ivo Petrov

The European Union and its Member States would like to warmly welcome H.E. Ambassador Ivo Petrov to the Permanent Council and thank him for his report on the activities of the OSCE Centre in Ashgabat. We would also like to congratulate Ambassador Petrov for the recent extension of his appointment as Head of the Centre for another year.

The OSCE Centre in Ashgabat plays an important role in assisting Turkmenistan implement key reforms. It can effectively respond to changes on the ground and focus on areas where our Organisation has a recognised added-value. We underline that for all field operations effective evaluation is essential to ensure efficient use of resources and aids the development of best practices and the process of lesson learning. We thank you for highlighting some of the key impacts made by the mission through its programmatic work in this reporting period.

The EU enjoys good cooperation in energy and trade with Turkmenistan and looks forward to upgrading the institutional framework of EU-Turkmenistan relations with a Partnership and Cooperation Agreement. We welcome the active participation of Turkmenistan in the first meeting of the High Level EU-Central Asia Security Dialogue in June 2013, as part of the regional political dialogue, and encourage Turkmenistan to demonstrate further involvement in this framework. The EU reiterates its commitment to support Turkmenistan in its democratic and socio-economic reform process, including through bilateral and regional cooperation programs and development cooperation, as well as giving new impetus to our political, trade and energy cooperation.

The EU welcomes the enhanced interaction between the OSCE Centre in Ashgabat and the Government of Turkmenistan, and encourages further deepening of cooperation in all three dimensions. We welcome the first address of the Foreign Minister, Rashid Meredow, to the Permanent Council in February this year, as well as the nomination of a permanent Delegation to the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, which consolidates the overall relations between Turkmenistan and the OSCE.

Turkmenistan and the EU share a common aim to promote a stable, secure and prosperous region, particularly with a view to the forthcoming withdrawal of ISAF from Afghanistan. We value Turkmenistan's role in achieving this aim, including through the OSCE.

In the Politico-Military Dimension, we value the focus of the Centre on activities in the area of border security and management, and we welcome the commencement of the training project on Strengthening Border Guard Capacity. The EU commends Turkmenistan's efforts in combating trafficking in drugs and psychotropic substances in Central Asia and the neighboring regions. We also welcome the connection of the Ministry of Defense to the OSCE Communications Network as a significant development in the country's implementation of its CSBM commitments.

In the Second Dimension, we welcome the continuation of activities of the Centre in the area of good governance, thus assisting the Government in amending legislation in order to comply with international standards related to anti-corruption and anti-money laundering. We also welcome the Ministry of Finance's objective to develop a Good Governance Resource Centre. We encourage Turkmenistan to persevere on the path of reforms, and to strengthen good governance. Furthermore, we welcome the Centre's activities related to energy security and water management including its involvement, alongside the OSCE Chairmanship

and the Turkmen authorities, in the High Level International Conference on “Energy Security and Sustainability – the OSCE Perspective”.

The EU remains concerned about the many shortcomings concerning respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms in Turkmenistan. These issues are discussed in the framework of the EU-Turkmenistan Human Rights Dialogue and we appreciate Turkmenistan’s expressed commitment to comply with international human rights standards. However, we note that there is still a significant gap between the legislative framework and its practical implementation.

The EU is deeply concerned by the situation of civil society and of human rights defenders in Turkmenistan and urges the Turkmen authorities to comply fully with international commitments regarding freedom of association, including in terms of regulations for NGO’s and facilitating access for international NGO’s. We encourage the Centre to step up activities to develop and strengthen civil society and we reiterate the high value we attach to the Centre’s activities regarding individual complaints. We continue to appeal to the Turkmen authorities to participate in the annual OSCE Human Dimension Implementation Meeting in Warsaw and to engage with civil society, including on issues such as the “Prove They Are Alive Campaign” which was highlighted at last year’s meeting.

We support the Centre’s continuous activity towards promoting the OSCE principles and commitments in the area of human rights, specifically on the rule of law, freedom of media, freedom of religion and belief, combating trafficking in Human Beings, and promoting women’s rights. Activities by the Centre to increase awareness of OSCE electoral commitments, which are of great importance to the EU, led to the invitation for the first time to ODIHR to assess the parliamentary elections in December 2013. We call on Turkmenistan to implement the recommendations of the ODIHR Election Assessment Mission Report.

With regard to media freedom, we welcome the work of the Centre to raise awareness in the area of online media, and its efforts to develop education for journalists. We note the interest of the Turkmen authorities to create all necessary conditions to ensure access to the internet for every citizen. We call on the authorities to continue cooperation with the Centre and the Representative on Freedom of the Media in order to ensure the implementation of relevant commitments.

Finally, we wish Ambassador Petrov great success in his future endeavours.

The Candidate Countries the FORMER YUGOSLAV REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA*, MONTENEGRO*, ICELAND+ and SERBIA*, the Countries of the Stabilisation and Association Process and Potential Candidates ALBANIA and BOSNIA and HERZEGOVINA, and the EFTA country NORWAY, member of the European Economic Area 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.