



**EUROPEAN UNION**

**OSCE Permanent Council N° 1181  
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**EU statement in reply to the OSCE Project Co-ordinator in  
Uzbekistan, H.E. Ambassador John MacGregor**

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The EU and its Member States warmly welcome the OSCE Project Co-ordinator in Uzbekistan Ambassador John MacGregor back to the Permanent Council and thank him for his comprehensive report.

We welcome the increased engagement of Uzbekistan with the OSCE and the intensified co-operation between the host country and the Project Co-ordinator. We appreciate that the project activities support the host country in fulfilling its OSCE commitments in all three dimensions and are consistent with the host country's reform priority areas of the 2017 - 2021 Action Strategy for Development and the 2018 State Programme. We welcome the Presidential Decree of November 2017 abolishing income tax for local OSCE staff. We took note of the agreement on a Road Map of Co-operation between Uzbekistan and the OSCE reached between the President of Uzbekistan and the OSCE Secretary General in December 2017. We would like to hear more details about the positive impact of the Road Map on PCUz's activities.

We acknowledge the significantly increased demand from the host government for PCUz's projects and the considerable increase in tempo of PCUz's operational activities. We would like to hear from the PCUz his recommendations with regard to how the OSCE can best react to the current opening and positively respond to the requests for intensified co-operation by the host government.

In the politico-military dimension, we welcome the focus on combating transnational threats. We appreciate regional and sub-regional activities such as the September 2017 Conference on the role of information and communication technologies in regional and international security. We support activities aimed at countering violent

extremism and radicalization that lead to terrorism (VERLT) and appreciate the emphasis on human rights-compliant policies in countering VERLT. We welcome the initiative of Uzbekistan to organize a joint conference with the OSCE on Youth and Countering Violent Extremism later this year. We would like to hear more details from the PCUz about the planned event.

In the economic and environmental dimension, we appreciate the PCUz's support for host government's efforts aimed at improving good governance and fighting corruption. We welcome activities that engage wide public into these efforts. We value projects in the area of anti-money laundering and countering financing of terrorism. We particularly support training activities aimed at economic empowerment of women and welcome the co-operation with Westminster International University in Tashkent.

In the human dimension, we welcome the PCUz's support for host country's efforts to advance judicial reforms, increase transparency of public prosecutors and promote access to legal aid for vulnerable groups. We also support the assistance to the Ombudsperson Institution. We welcome and further encourage co-operation between the host country, the PCUz and ODIHR. We also commend the co-operation with the Office of the Special Representative and Co-ordinator for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings. We value activities aimed at supporting the host country in fulfilling its OSCE commitments related to freedom of the media. We commend Uzbekistan for hosting the OSCE Central Asia Media Conference in October 2017 and encourage further co-operation with the RFoM. We appreciate PCUz's focus on capacity-building for journalists.

We welcome the increased participation of Uzbekistan in OSCE events in all three dimensions and the intensified co-operation with OSCE institutions. We appreciate that the PCUz continued to facilitate the participation of representatives of government and non-governmental organizations in OSCE events. We also welcome that the PCUz mainstreams a gender perspective in all projects. We value the good co-operation of the PCUz with other international organizations, including the EU.

Uzbekistan is a significant partner of the European Union. The implementation of the national reform Action Strategy 2017–2021 has opened prospects for further deepening of Uzbek – EU relations. The EU attaches great importance to stability

and prosperity of Uzbekistan and the whole Central Asian region. In November 2017 the EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Federica Mogherini chaired the EU – Central Asia Foreign Ministers’ meeting in Samarkand. The EU is determined to further develop dialogue and co-operation on regional security challenges, while ensuring a stronger involvement of Afghanistan. We therefore appreciated the Tashkent Conference on Afghanistan held last month, in which the HR/VP participated as an opening speaker. The EU also welcomes the reinvigorated regional dialogue on water and the environment. The Central Asian Environmental forum in Tashkent in June 2018 should be used for shaping regional steps for mitigating the impact of climate change. The EU also reaffirms the crucial importance of continuing a meaningful dialogue on good governance, the rule of law and human rights. We have taken note that several journalists and human rights activists have been released from prison since the beginning of 2017 and call on Uzbekistan to release all prisoners of conscience.

In concluding the EU would like to ensure H.E. Ambassador MacGregor about our continued support for the Project Co-ordinator’s activities and we thank him and his able team for their dedicated work.

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 and LIECHTENSTEIN, members of the European Economic Area, as well as GEORGIA 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.