



## **EUROPEAN UNION**

### **OSCE Permanent Council No. 1465 Vienna, 14 March 2024**

#### **EU Statement in response to the Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister of Kazakhstan H.E Murat Nurtleu**

1. The European Union warmly welcomes Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister of Kazakhstan, H.E Murat Nurtleu, to the Permanent Council. Kazakhstan is an important partner for the European Union in Central Asia. We value our shared commitments to OSCE values, such as democracy, respect for human rights, and international law, and to open and equal dialogue. This includes also the respect for the independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity of all states including within the framework of all international and regional fora.
2. Since the beginning of our diplomatic relations over 30 years ago, bilateral relations between the EU and Kazakhstan have been growing stronger. Our Enhanced Partnership for Cooperation Agreement (EPCA) has allowed us to expand cooperation in twenty-nine key policy areas, including trade and customs, environment and climate change, energy and green economy, transport, education, research and development, and human rights. The EU is Kazakhstan's top trading partner and provider of foreign direct investment.
3. We commend Kazakhstan's clear stance on Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine and its adherence to international law, including the UN Charter and the Helsinki Final Act principles.
4. We thank the Kazakh government for its active and constructive engagement in support of the OSCE as our common security platform, as well as its efforts to intensify regional cooperation within Central Asia. We particularly welcome

Kazakhstan's substantial contribution to the OSCE institutional decisions leading up to last year's Ministerial Council in Skopje.

5. We appreciate Kazakhstan's contributions across all three OSCE dimensions, notably in the fields of border management, climate and security, connectivity, labour migration, sustainable economic development, as well as combating radicalisation, terrorism, human trafficking, and money laundering. We also welcome the Kazakh government's commitment to gender equality as a cross-cutting issue.

6. We acknowledge the challenges for our Central Asian partners arising from both the situation in Afghanistan and the effects of climate change in the region. We remain ready to provide further support to the region according to your needs.

7. The EU welcomes President Tokayev's political and economic reforms for the country's democratic, social, and economic development. We particularly support efforts to promote the rule of law, respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, including freedoms of association and of the media. We take positive note of the good cooperation between the Program Office and the host authorities, particularly on rule of law reforms and the investigation of the tragic events of January 2022.

8. We also welcome the increased cooperation with ODIHR and the request for its assistance on multiple areas of ongoing reforms. We appreciate in particular the opportunity offered to ODIHR to monitor the trials connected to the January 2022 events, which will contribute to increased transparency and accountability.

9. We appreciate the fact that the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media has been consulted on the new media law draft. We trust that the final shape of the law will take into account the results of consultations with the OSCE and with civil society, in order for the law to fulfill international standards.

10. Under the current budget cycle, the EU has allocated a Cooperation Facility to Kazakhstan, EUR 9 million for the period 2021-2024, focusing on two priority areas: sustainable economic growth with a particular focus on women and youth-led micro-, small and medium-sized enterprises, and on the rule of law. We believe that this will contribute to the implementation of the EPCA and support Kazakhstan on its reform path.

11. One of the key areas where we have stepped up cooperation is transport connectivity. We welcome the participation of Minister of Transport, Mr. Karabayev, accompanied by a large delegation, to the Global Gateway Forum which took place last October in Brussels (25-27 October 2023), and the Global Gateway Central Asia Investors' Forum on Transport Connectivity between Europe and Central Asia, which took place in January, also in Brussels (29-30 January 2024). We were very pleased that the European Investment Bank signed memorandums of understanding for project co-financing with Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, and with the Development Bank of Kazakhstan, totaling EUR 1.47 billion, at the Investors' Forum. These were good opportunities to follow up on the key findings of the EU/EBRD Study on Sustainable Transport Connections between Europe and Central Asia.

12. In conclusion, we once again thank Minister Nurtleu for his address at today's Permanent Council meeting. The European Union is committed to deepening and broadening our relations with Kazakhstan in all mutually beneficial areas. We will continue working with Kazakhstan to further advance its reforms towards an inclusive, democratic and fair society.

The Candidate Countries NORTH MACEDONIA\*, MONTENEGRO\*, SERBIA\*, ALBANIA\*, the REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA, BOSNIA and HERZEGOVINA\*, and GEORGIA, the EFTA countries ICELAND, LIECHTENSTEIN and NORWAY, members of the European Economic Area, as well as SAN MARINO align themselves with this statement.

\* North Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia, Albania, and Bosnia and Herzegovina continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.