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STATEMENT BY THE EUROPEAN UNION AT THE 1290th MEETING OF THE OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL

19 November 2020

In response to the Co-Chairs of the Minsk Group, the Personal Representative of the Chairperson-in-Office on the Conflict Dealt with by the OSCE Minsk Conference and the Head of the High-Level Planning Group

The European Union welcomes the Co-Chairs of the Minsk Group Igor Popov, Andrew Schofer and Stéphane Visconti, the Personal Representative of the Chairperson-in-Office on the Conflict Dealt with by the OSCE Minsk Conference Andrzej Kasprzyk and the Head of the High-Level Planning Group Lieutenant Colonel Sulo Mustafaraj and thanks them for their reports, which are particularly timely after some two months of intense and deadly fighting in the Nagorno-Karabakh region.

While welcoming the cessation of hostilities, the European Union repeats that the complete termination of the fighting must be lasting and pave the way for the resumption of substantive negotiations between the sides with a view to achieving a comprehensive political settlement of the conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh. It urges the sides to return as soon as possible to the negotiating table and to engage – in good faith, under the aegis of the Co-Chairs and within the framework of the Minsk Group – in the identification and discussion of the various parameters of a future comprehensive agreement on the basis of the fundamental principles of the Charter of the United Nations and the Helsinki Final Act.

The European Union takes the opportunity to welcome the co-ordinated initiatives taken very promptly by the Minsk Group Co-Chair countries through the statement by the Heads of State of 1 October and the statement by the Foreign Ministers of 5 October and through the direct mediation efforts of the Minsk Group Co-Chairs with a view to maintaining permanent contact with the sides so as to establish a humanitarian ceasefire and alleviate the suffering of the civilian populations, who have paid dearly during the fighting. In particular, it thanks the Co-Chairs and the Personal Representative of the Chairperson-in-Office for their ceaseless efforts in that regard. The European Union has taken good note of the ceasefire agreement concluded on 10 November between Azerbaijan, Armenia and Russia.

In the short term, the efforts by the international community should focus primarily on humanitarian issues, which, with the onset of winter and in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, need to be urgently addressed. In that regard, the European Union believes that the action of the Minsk Group Co-Chairs, supported on the ground by the Personal Representative of the Chairperson-in-Office, will be vital for dealing with these humanitarian issues in conjunction with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and the International Committee of the Red Cross.

The necessary means must be provided for the continuation of the complementary activities of the Minsk Group Co-Chairs and the Personal Representative of the Chairperson-in-Office.

In conclusion, the European Union reaffirms its full support for the work of the Co-Chairs of the OSCE Minsk Group in their search for a negotiated and lasting solution to the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. It stands ready to further support their initiatives and also those of the Personal Representative of the Chairperson-in-Office and the High-Level Planning Group, and remains for its part wholly committed, in particular through its special representative Toivo Klaar, to efforts to establish lasting peace and promote prosperous development in the region.

The candidate countries the Republic of North Macedonia¹, Montenegro¹, Serbia¹ and Albania¹, country of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidate Bosnia and Herzegovina, the European Free Trade Association countries and members of the European Economic Area Iceland and Liechtenstein, as well as Georgia, the Republic of Moldova, Andorra and San Marino, align themselves with this statement.

1 The Republic of North Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Albania continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.