



EUROPEAN UNION

**OSCE Permanent Council No 1105
Vienna, 16 June 2016**

**EU Statement in Response to the Report of the Head of the
OSCE Programme Office in Astana, H.E. Ambassador
György Szabó**

The European Union and its Member States warmly welcome Ambassador Szabó to the Permanent Council in his new capacity and thank him for his comprehensive report.

The European Union shares good cooperation with Kazakhstan based on an Enhanced Partnership and Cooperation Agreement, elements of which are being provisionally applied since 1 May 2016. This new generation of agreement represents a significant step forward in EU-Kazakhstan relations. We also welcome Kazakhstan's active involvement in the High Level EU-Central Asia Security Dialogue, as part of the regional political dialogue.

After violent attacks in the city of Aktobe on 5 June, the European Union will continue to work with Kazakhstan and other countries of Central Asia in addressing security threats and in preventing the spread of violent extremism. The European Union condemns radicalism and extremism in all its forms and reiterates that fundamental freedoms of all citizens must be guaranteed in the pursuit of security and counter-terrorism operations.

The EU welcomes the continued OSCE presence in Kazakhstan. At the same time, the points we raised in our interpretative statement of December 2014 on PC Decision 1153 on the OSCE Programme Office in Astana seem, today, even more valid. We stressed for instance the importance of the Programme Office being able to flexibly respond to developments as they arise and uncurtailed cooperation with civil society. We encourage the authorities to develop its cooperation with the OSCE to its full potential. We also encourage the Programme Office to make full use of its mandate. We support the Programme Office's assistance to the host country's

extensive reform goals across all three dimensions in line with OSCE principles and commitments.

We welcome that the Programme Office has continued its longstanding cooperation with the host country and international partners, and has increased its regional activities, as well as constantly engaging civil society, media, academia, and business community in its activities. We welcome the involvement of youth in addressing regional security challenges and threats. We encourage the Programme Office to develop further its efforts to engage civil society.

In the Politico-military Dimension, we welcome that capacity building in border security issues, including in a regional context, remains a priority, as well as activities aimed at countering violent extremism and radicalisation that leads to terrorism, combating transnational organised crime, and trafficking in human beings and drugs. We commend the Programme Office for engaging young people and civil society in some of these activities. We also appreciate that the Office organised activities related to managing public assemblies, as well as to policing in multi-ethnic societies.

We welcome the Programme Office's continued work to promote good governance, with a view to enhancing transparency, combating corruption, money laundering, as well as terrorism financing. We also welcome activities related to improving labour migration management.

We welcome the involvement of the Office in promoting a competitive market economy based on energy efficiency and the use of renewable energy. We also welcome activities meant to reduce the role of carbon fuels and the development of legislation in this regard which are key to implement the Paris climate agreement considering that Kazakhstan is especially prone to the negative effects of climate change. In this vein, we further commend the Office's advocacy for water management in a transboundary context, disaster risk reduction and environmental education.

We place particular emphasis on the human dimension programme. We remain concerned about increasingly severe restrictions of human rights and fundamental freedoms, as well as attempts by the authorities to control civil society. We recall our concerns voiced in the Permanent Council on the 18 February and 26 May

regarding freedom of association and freedom of the media, calling on Kazakhstan to lift restrictive legal provisions on freedom of assembly in accordance with OSCE commitments and take account of recommendations made by civil society. We again encourage Kazakhstan to make use of the OSCE's expertise, including that of ODIHR and the RFoM.

We commend the Programme Office for having continued to promote human rights and fundamental freedoms, the rule of law and the strengthening of democratic institutions. We welcome the Office's involvement in supporting the drafting and amendment of national legislation in key areas in line with international standards and OSCE commitments.

We value the Programme Office's continued work with the host authorities, civil society and media on issues related to freedom of expression and of the media, freedom of religion or belief, and non-discrimination. We welcome activity on criminal justice, judicial and penitentiary and judiciary reform and would encourage further work with the Council of Europe on Neighbourhood Cooperation Priorities. We value the Office's work on combating trafficking in human being, combating domestic violence and fostering gender mainstreaming.

Recalling our Statement in the Permanent Council following the early parliamentary elections, we believe that the Office should continue to support Kazakhstan to improve the electoral system. We recall the welcome commitment of the distinguished Ambassador of Kazakhstan in PC on 14 April, that his authorities would carefully scrutinise the final ODIHR report and encourage Kazakhstan to respond positively to that report when it is issued and to make full use of ODIHR's support.

We continue to underline that for all field operations, effective evaluation is essential in ensuring the efficient use of resources, and that activities remain result-oriented. We encourage field operations to focus their reporting at outcome level, on results and follow-up, and to ensure continuous evaluation. We would be grateful if Ambassador Szabó could highlight some of the key impacts of the Office's work during this reporting period, as well as providing information on what is planned by way of evaluation during the next year.

In conclusion, we thank Ambassador Szabó for his report and wish him and his staff well for their work throughout the year.

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 NORWAY, members of the European Economic Area, 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.