



EUROPEAN UNION

**OSCE Permanent Council Nr 1135
Vienna, 2 March 2017**

**EU Statement in Response to the Address by the UNHCR
Assistant High Commissioner for Protection, Mr. Volker Türk**

On behalf of the European Union, it is a pleasure to welcome you today to the Permanent Council and thank you for your statement. The state of affairs you have just presented, with the number of persons forced to flee their homes and communities rising every year, is more than worrying. As we are facing an unprecedented number of simultaneous large scale complex displacement crises with people fleeing conflicts, violence, and human rights violation, including in the OSCE area, we commend UNHCR for its continued and robust engagement in what are often complex humanitarian crises and difficult working environments.

UNCHR and OSCE have a long-standing history of collaboration on a variety of issues, concerning the human dimension, conflict prevention and resolution, and displacement. Since the first Memorandum of Understanding between OSCE and UNHCR was signed, 19 years have passed and the collaboration has intensified and broadened over time. OSCE and UNHCR have complemented each other over the years. Better addressing migration and refugee flows, internal displacement, and combatting trafficking in human beings constitute some of the shared interests for our organisations.

The dire humanitarian consequences of the conflict in eastern Ukraine persist and have great impact on the civilian population. Continued shelling over the past three months has regularly disrupted vital water and electricity supplies exacerbating existing shortages of essentials such as food, medicine and health care, clean water and shelter. The EU values the efforts of UNHCR in eastern Ukraine to deliver humanitarian aid to those in need and to respond to protection concerns. We also commend the UNHCR for its advocacy towards the authorities concerning legislation for Internally Displaced Persons in Ukraine, including on the issue of social services provisions. We join the UNHCR in welcoming the Government's Action Plan towards the non-government controlled territories in eastern Ukraine adopted on 11 January.

Last week, the European Commission announced an additional EUR 18 million in humanitarian aid for Ukraine. Together with the funding provided directly by the Member States, the European Union as a whole has directed more than EUR 399 million in humanitarian and recovery aid to those affected by the conflict since early 2014. We reiterate our call for increased safe and unimpeded humanitarian access to crisis affected populations in the non-government controlled areas.

We commend the collaboration with the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine, sharing information and conducting capacity-building activities. The joint OSCE/UNHCR Protection Checklist, which was distributed to the monitors and also used in trainings, is a good example in this sense.

We also value the UNHCR's efforts to strengthen protection capacity across the South Caucasus, including through its interaction with established formats such as the Geneva International Discussions and the Minsk Group.

We commend UNHCR for its rapid response to the large movements of people, also affecting the OSCE region. UNHCR is an indispensable partner, not least for the European Union, in ensuring the necessary protection and addressing the many challenges posed by these unprecedented flows. Managing migration is truly a global long-term challenge that surpasses the capacities of individual countries, and is a challenge that we need to address also collectively and in a coordinated way with solidarity and responsibility. This was strongly recognised by the adoption of the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants in September 2016. The EU remains committed to strengthening international cooperation in the field of migration and will contribute actively in the development of the two global compacts on refugees and on safe, orderly and regular migration. We fully agree with you that the OSCE's convening power and expertise can give a valuable contribution to the governance of large movements of migrants and refugees, namely by fostering dialogue and cooperation between countries of origin, transit and destination, in a comprehensive manner.

In terms of human rights protection, there can be little doubt that displaced persons are some of the most vulnerable populations who are often deprived from their most basic human rights and fundamental freedoms or become victims of human trafficking.

The EU and its Member States continue to support the UNHCR 10-year campaign to end statelessness by 2024. We acknowledge the importance of identifying stateless persons globally and strengthening their protection thus allowing them to enjoy core fundamental rights and reducing the risk of discrimination or unequal treatment.

In conclusion, we look forward to a continued close cooperation with UNHCR on the response to humanitarian needs of refugees and IDPs and their protection, as well as the promotion of durable solutions for affected populations.

The Candidate Countries the FORMER YUGOSLAV REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA*, MONTENEGRO* 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 THE REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA, GEORGIA, ANDORRA and SAN MARINO align themselves with this statement.

* The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro and Albania continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.