



EUROPEAN UNION

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**EU statement in response to the Minister for Foreign Affairs of
Ukraine, H.E. Leonid Kozhara**

The European Union congratulates H.E. Leonid Kozhara, on his recent appointment as the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine and on the assumption of the functions of the Chairperson-in-Office of the OSCE. We warmly welcome you to the Permanent Council and thank you for your address outlining the priorities and the programme of the Ukrainian Chairmanship in 2013.

The EU welcomes the opportunity offered by the Ukrainian Chairmanship of the OSCE to further our relationship with Ukraine, a valued Partner. At their meeting on 10 December last, EU Foreign Ministers reaffirmed the EU's engagement with Ukraine, in the context of the Eastern Partnership, towards political association and economic integration based on the respect for common values, acknowledging the European aspirations of Ukraine and welcoming its European choice.

We welcome therefore the intention of the Ukrainian Chairmanship to promote efforts aimed at further realising the vision of building a free, democratic, common and indivisible Euro-Atlantic and Eurasian security community in the OSCE area, rooted in agreed principles, shared commitments and common goals as set out in the 2010 Astana Commemorative Declaration.

The EU welcomed the adoption of the decision by the Dublin Ministerial Council on the Helsinki +40 process which offers us a multiannual framework for realising our vision for the future of the organisation, based on the concept of comprehensive security. We hope that this process will lead to a more effective and efficient OSCE, better able to fulfil its objectives and to meet the challenges of the 21st century and contributing to efforts to restore trust and confidence in the OSCE space.

We welcome Ukraine's plans to move swiftly to establish an open-ended informal working group at ambassadorial level to drive this process forward and we stand ready to support not only the Ukrainian Chairmanship but also the future Swiss and Serbian Chairmanships in advancing the Helsinki +40 agenda.

We share the belief of Ukraine in the important role that the OSCE can play in fostering cooperation between participating States aimed at building a community with full respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms and the rule of law.

The EU deeply regrets the failure to adopt any decisions in the human dimension at the last two Ministerial Councils. Security cannot be achieved without respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. The EU cannot accept a weakening of existing commitments and their implementation. As stated by EU Foreign Ministers at their December meeting, we expect Ukraine, as the Chairmanship, to take a leading role in upholding and promoting all existing commitments across all three dimensions. We are glad therefore to see that full implementation by all participating States of commitments undertaken in the human dimension will be at the top of the Ukrainian Chairmanship's agenda.

The EU attaches particular importance to Freedom of Expression and Freedom of the Media, both online as well as offline, and we note with appreciation that, continuing on from the Lithuanian and Irish Chairmanships, this issue will also be a priority for Ukraine. We note that Ukraine proposes to look at legislation in this

area and the EU would support a focus on those legislative measures that promote these freedoms including consideration of decriminalising defamation and promoting access to public information. We would also wish to see a continued focus on the need to enhance the safety of journalists. We are reassured that work on Freedom of Assembly and Association, which is another priority for the EU, will continue this year. We support promoting freedom of religion or belief, and effective remedies for human rights violations.

We support the prioritisation of combating trafficking in human beings and addressing gender issues including implementation of relevant Security Council Resolutions, bearing in mind that these are cross-dimensional issues. The EU also supports the promotion of human rights education for children and youth in the OSCE area. We share Ukraine's support for civil society engagement in achieving the goals and objectives of the OSCE.

The EU notes that Ukraine has also identified democratic elections and election observation as a human dimension theme in 2013. This topic has been addressed on a number of occasions, most recently at a supplementary human dimension meeting in 2012. The EU is a strong supporter of ODIHR's election observation methodology which is based on the principles of independence, impartiality and professionalism. We reiterate our support for the autonomy of ODIHR and our support for the conduct of its election observation without undue restrictions or limitations. The EU will not support any proposals that would compromise this autonomy or election observation methodology.

We welcome Ukraine's determination to address protracted conflicts in the OSCE area, seeking to achieve further tangible progress toward their resolution within existing formats. This is also a top priority of the EU. Turning first to the 5+2 process the EU will continue to play an active role. We were encouraged by the notable increase in the pace of the negotiations on the settlement of the Transnistrian conflict with five formal 5+2 meetings in 2012, following their

resumption in 2011. We welcome the Chairmanship's intention to maintain the positive dynamics of negotiations in this format throughout 2013 as well as promoting other measures conducive to conflict resolution. Through these and other activities we hope to see advances toward the goal of a comprehensive settlement based on the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Republic of Moldova. We welcome also your intention to visit this country later this month.

We look forward to cooperating with Ukraine in the framework of the Geneva discussions with the aim of building trust and confidence between the parties and to effect tangible improvements to the situation on the ground. We reiterate our firm support for the Geneva discussions and the security and stability of Georgia, based on full respect for the principles of independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity, recognised by international law.

The EU welcomes the Chairmanship's support for the efforts of the Minsk Group and its Co-Chairmen in assisting the parties to find a peaceful solution to the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. The EU takes this opportunity to reiterate its attachment to the Minsk Group and reaffirms its full confidence in the ability of the co-Chairs to advance the search for a fair and lasting political settlement of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, which it regards as vital for the future of the region.

We welcome the Chairmanship's intention to continue the implementation of the decision on elements of the conflict cycle of 2011. Regarding early warning and early action, we appreciate your recent statement on incidents in Central Asia that open dialogue, thorough information and close cooperation of all parties involved are the key to peaceful settlement of conflicts which often result simply from mutual misunderstandings.

The EU welcomes the Chairmanship's attachment to implementing the TNT decisions which were adopted in 2012 and endorsed by our Ministers in Dublin. The text of these decisions has been discussed in detail over several years. Now

it is time for action, so that, in the words of our Ministers, we can “translate political commitments into effective and sustainable programmatic action”. We underline the particular importance of working, where appropriate, together with other relevant international actors in this field. We attach importance to a cross-dimensional perspective in addressing transnational threats with full respect for the implementation of human dimension commitments.

We remain strongly committed to an OSCE role in developing Confidence Building Measures in the cyber security area and welcome Ukraine’s intention to support the work of the relevant informal working group.

We note that the Ukrainian Chairmanship attaches high importance to the issues of arms control, disarmament and Confidence- and Security-Building Measures as an integral part of the OSCE concept of comprehensive, co-operative, equal and indivisible security, as well as Ukraine’s plans to work closely with the Chairs of the Forum for Security Cooperation to facilitate discussion within the existing FSC formats. In this context we would like to reiterate once again our readiness to actively and appropriately contribute to work in this area. We consider that abiding commitments on arms control and CSBM regimes, as set out in Astana, Vilnius and other relevant OSCE documents, remain valid and should be further progressed.

The EU shares the view of the Chairmanship that the economic and environmental dimension is an integral part of the OSCE’s concept of comprehensive security. The EU believes that the work of OSCE in the economic and environmental dimension must remain focused on issues directly related to security. There is a consensus that the OSCE strives for a balanced and complementary focus and avoids duplicating the efforts of other specialised international and regional forums. The EU supports the Chairmanship in its efforts to improve the effectiveness of the OSCE’s Economic and Environmental Activities contributing to confidence and security in the OSCE area.

The EU looks forward to the discussions that will take place in the framework of the 21st Economic and Environmental Forum. We are convinced that the discussions will be helpful on identifying the complementary role the OSCE could play in the energy field, especially where it can add value to established bilateral, regional and multilateral mechanisms and frameworks. One such issue is good governance in the energy field and in this respect the Declaration on Good Governance adopted by the Dublin Ministerial Council offers a good platform for our work.

The EU welcomes the Chairmanship's affirmation of its consistent support of the mandate and activities of the three autonomous OSCE institutions. We also attach great importance to the work of the OSCE field operations. We highly value the role the executive structures play in promoting OSCE commitments and assisting participating States in their implementation. We believe the Project Coordinator in Ukraine will remain a valuable partner for Ukraine also during the Chairmanship. We are glad to see that you plan to undertake an extensive round of visits to countries that host field operations and, in this regard, we welcome your decision to prioritise the Central Asian countries.

The EU is pleased to note that the Ukrainian Chairmanship will explore further the ways for a mutually beneficial co-operation between the OSCE and its Asian and Mediterranean partners. We welcome also your intention to focus on Afghanistan.

In conclusion, the EU looks forward to close cooperation with Ukraine as the Chair-in-Office of the OSCE in 2013. You will have our full support for all your efforts to defend and promote the core values and principles of the organisation. We wish you and your teams in Vienna and Kyiv every success in the year ahead.

The Acceding Country Croatia*, the Candidate Countries the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia*, Montenegro*, and Iceland+, the Countries of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidates Albania and Bosnia and Herzegovina, and the EFTA country Liechtenstein, members of the European Economic Area, as well as the Republic of Moldova, Georgia, Andorra and San Marino, align themselves with this statement.

* Croatia, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, and Montenegro continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.

+ Iceland continues to be a member of the EFTA and of the European Economic Area.