



EUROPEAN UNION

OSCE Permanent Council No. 1522 Vienna, 29 May 2025

EU Statement in Response to the Head of the OSCE Mission in Kosovo, Mr. Gerard McGurk

1. The European Union warmly welcomes the new Head of the OSCE Mission in Kosovo, Mr Gerard McGurk, and thanks him for his first biannual report to the Permanent Council. We would also like to thank the Deputy Head of the Mission, Cornelia Taylor, for leading the Mission for more than 7 months as Acting Head of Mission in an exemplary way.
2. We reiterate our strong support for the valuable work carried out by the OSCE Mission in Kosovo, which has proven itself as a trusted partner of all communities, and contributes to a safe and secure, democratic, prosperous and multi-ethnic Kosovo^{*1}, based on respect for human rights, fundamental freedoms and the rule of law, including the rights of persons belonging to minorities. The EU welcomes the Mission's balanced approach based on three programmatic pillars: human rights and communities, democratisation, and security and public safety.
3. The EU welcomes the Mission's activities on promoting inter-community relations and emphasises the importance of coordination with relevant stakeholders for the protection of the rights of persons belonging to minorities and vulnerable groups. This entails ensuring voluntary returns, their safety, protecting their property rights, including against contentious expropriations, and preserving their cultural and religious heritage, such as through the Special Protective Zones. We highlight the importance of engagement with civil society, including through youth-oriented activities, to enhance inter-ethnic relations and inter-municipal cooperation, and promote dialogue.

^{*} This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSCR 1244/1999 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence.

4. Improving the accountability and transparency of institutions remains equally important. We commend the Mission's continued assistance in strengthening Kosovo's democratic institutions and its focus on enhancing public safety, the rule of law, and transparent and inclusive good governance at both central and local levels. The EU highly values the Mission's contributions to enhancing Kosovo's inter-institutional co-operation in addressing security challenges and risks related to trafficking in human beings, terrorism leading to extremism, organised crime and corruption, as well as hate crimes, and attacks against journalists and public defamation campaigns. We particularly appreciate the Mission's activities in support of Kosovo's legislative and policy agenda, notably its contribution to the review of 14 draft legal acts, and its continuous engagement in the implementation of the EU-funded OSCE Regional Trial Monitoring Project in the Western Balkans.
5. We take note of the report by the EU Election Observation Mission (EU EOM), echoed by the PACE's observers, which highlighted that the first Assembly elections held in Kosovo on 9 February 2025 under the New Law on General Elections adopted in 2023, were peaceful and competitive. At the same time, EOM noted strong political polarisation and called for clearer electoral legislation, improved institutional independence and more transparent campaign financing. The electoral process also suffered from insufficient preparation by the Central Election Commission and delays in result tabulation. In view of these findings, we encourage Kosovo to implement all the EOM's outstanding recommendations, ahead of the local elections later this year.
6. We welcome the Assembly's adoption of the National Programme for European Integration 2024–2028 in October 2024, particularly in the context of the Growth Plan for the Western Balkans and the region's progressive regional socio-economic convergence. At the same time, we express concern about the Assembly deadlock and call for its swift resolution to facilitate the adoption of essential legislation needed to implement priority reforms for the benefit of all citizens.
7. The EU values the Mission's monitoring and early warning efforts, particularly given the fragile and complex security environment in the north of Kosovo. We welcome its continued good cooperation and coordination with partners on the ground, including the EUSR/EU Office in Kosovo, EULEX, KFOR, and the UN in support of multilateral efforts

aimed at de-escalating tensions and implementing obligations under the EU-facilitated Belgrade-Pristina Dialogue.

8. The EU continues to closely monitor developments in the north of Kosovo. Recalling our previous statements, we reiterate the need to establish the facts regarding the Zubin Potok canal explosion on 29 November 2024, and the Banjska/Banjskë attack on 24 September 2023, and call on Serbia to hold perpetrators of the Banjska/Banjskë attack accountable and face justice. In parallel to the investigations, we stress the importance of both sides refraining from actions that could further escalate tensions.
9. The EU reiterates its concern about the recent unilateral and uncoordinated actions in the north of Kosovo by Pristina, including the closure of Kosovo Serbs' institutions that have negatively affected the daily lives and living conditions of the local communities and could worsen the fragile security situation on the ground. The EU expects both Pristina and Belgrade to address open issues between them in the EU-facilitated Dialogue. Pristina's decision to maintain access to diploma verification services for Kosovo Serbs is a positive step towards restoring mutual trust and creating a favourable environment for social cohesion and integration.
10. We underline that there is no alternative to the EU-facilitated dialogue. The Agreement on the Path to Normalisation and its Implementation Annex, adopted in February and March 2023, offer a clear platform for advancing the normalisation of relations. The obligations stemming from this Agreement remain valid and binding, and have been integrated into the respective European paths of both sides. We call on both sides to fully implement all obligations and past commitments without delay or preconditions.
11. Finally, with a strong interest in political and security consolidation in the region, the EU remains determined to continue assisting Kosovo towards lasting stability and prosperity. We wish Mr McGurk and the dedicated Mission team every success and assure them of the EU's resolute support in their important work.

Bosnia and Herzegovina, Liechtenstein, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Republic of Moldova, San Marino and Ukraine align themselves with this statement.