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PC.DEL/542/21
19 April 2021

ENGLISH
Original: FRENCH

STATEMENT BY THE EUROPEAN UNION AT THE 1309th MEETING OF THE OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL

15 April 2021

On the statement by the Co-Chairs of the OSCE Minsk Group

The European Union has taken due note of the statement by the Co-Chairs of the OSCE Minsk Group dated 13 April and is encouraged by the consolidation of the ceasefire on the ground and by the positive results achieved on such issues as repatriating the remains of fallen soldiers, the return of people displaced by the recent hostilities, and providing humanitarian assistance to communities heavily affected by the conflict.

The European Union takes this opportunity to reiterate how important it is for the parties to agree to the necessary efforts and to take bold decisions in order to finalize the return of prisoners of war and detainees. It emphasizes once again that this is a humanitarian matter of particular importance. It hopes that this priority process will be brought to a conclusion as soon as possible in accordance with international humanitarian law and the commitments to which the parties have subscribed.

Additionally, the European Union strongly encourages the parties to agree, under the aegis of the Minsk Group Co-Chairs, on the various parameters that would make it possible to implement, in the long term, a set of measures for stabilization, post-ceasefire rehabilitation and the rebuilding of trust. That refers, among other things, to access to Nagorno-Karabakh, as was stressed by the Co-Chairs of the Minsk Group. The exchange of all the data required to undertake effective demining of the conflict-affected areas will help to strengthen trust. The European Union recalls the great importance that it attaches, together with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), to the preservation and restoration of cultural and religious heritage in the region, and also to the development of people-to-people contacts.

In closing, the European Union reiterates its full support for the mediation format of the Minsk Group and its Co-Chairs designed to seek a negotiated and sustainable overall solution to the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict with a view to achieving a comprehensive and lasting final settlement. It stands ready to contribute – also through the European Union Special Representative for the South Caucasus – to the implementation of confidence-building measures.

The European Union also reiterates its support for the Special Representative of the OSCE Chairperson-in-Office and remains for its part fully committed to efforts aimed at establishing lasting peace and promoting prosperous development in the region.

The candidate countries the Republic of North Macedonia¹, Montenegro¹, Serbia¹ and Albania¹, the country of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidate country Bosnia and Herzegovina, the European Free Trade Association countries and members of the European Economic Area Iceland and Liechtenstein, as well as 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.