

**EUROPEAN UNION****OSCE Permanent Council No 1053
Vienna, 21 May 2015**

**EU statement in response to the Minister of Women Affairs
of Afghanistan, H.E. Dilbar Nazari**

The European Union warmly welcomes H.E. Dilbar Nazari to the Permanent Council and wishes to congratulate her on her appointment as Afghan Minister of Women Affairs, and to thank her for her presentation.

The EU strongly condemns the ongoing terrorist attacks claiming so many lives of civilians, including a member of the close protection team of the EU Police Mission in Afghanistan. Last week, the EU High Representative Mogherini underlined: “My deepest sympathy goes to the family, friends and loved ones of our colleague and of all other innocent victims. The Afghan government needs to ensure that those responsible for the attack are brought to justice”. The EU will continue its engagement for security, development and the respect and the improvement of rights for all in Afghanistan, of children and women first of all.

Madam Minister, we are looking forward to intensifying our cooperation with the Afghan government and your Ministry in setting a positive and progressive agenda for rights of women and girls and building on the results achieved over the past 13 years. These improvements require continuous support, since women’s active participation in rebuilding the state and economy is crucial. We welcome the importance President Ghani placed on the education of girls and women’s economic empowerment within his reform agenda. To this end, the EU has launched a number of new initiatives to promote women in leadership positions, gender equality and empowerment of women in Afghanistan.

We are interested to learn more about the Ministry’s work on a 5 year Action Plan on the Elimination of Violence against Women. We also welcome the Government of Afghanistan’s work on a National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security based

on UN Security Council Resolution 1325 through a country-wide consultative process, and we look forward to its speedy approval and entry into force. Political commitment, as well as the involvement of other relevant Ministries is key to ensuring a robust implementation of the Plan at the national, provincial and local levels. The EU stands ready to assist with this endeavour and has funds available this year.

Madam Minister, the EU hopes to find a strong partner in your Ministry when it comes to cooperating on gender aspects of judicial reforms and on strengthening female policing and the work of the police with female victims. We hope that your Ministry will actively participate in the EU-Afghanistan Human Rights Dialogue which is foreseen for June of this year. We would also welcome your efforts, along with your colleagues at the Ministry of Interior and Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission, to help protect Human Rights Defenders, particularly women.

It remains an important EU objective to promote greater participation of Afghan women in political and public life as well as their economic empowerment; over two thirds of the EU-funded thematic projects focus on rights of women and girls. The envisaged EU - Afghanistan Cooperation Agreement on Partnership and Development should create the overall legal framework for our cooperation and enshrine the joint commitment for human rights and rights of women and girls in particular.

Finally, the EU welcomes the ongoing and future engagement by the OSCE aimed at establishing long-term stability, security, prosperity and democracy in Afghanistan. Madam Minister, we wish you all success in your future work.

The Candidate Countries the FORMER YUGOSLAV REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA*, MONTENEGRO*, ICELAND+ and ALBANIA*, the Country of the Stabilisation and Association Process and Potential Candidate BOSNIA and HERZEGOVINA, and the EFTA country LIECHTENSTEIN, member of the European Economic Area, as well as UKRAINE, the REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA, ARMENIA and GEORGIA align themselves with this statement.

* The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro and Albania 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.