



## Chairmanship Statement on COVID 19

Also on behalf of:

*Andorra, Austria, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Canada, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Holy See, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Moldova, Monaco, Mongolia, Montenegro, Netherlands, North Macedonia, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Russian Federation, San Marino, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Tajikistan, Turkey, Turkmenistan, Ukraine, United Kingdom, United States, Uzbekistan*

1. We recognize that COVID-19 constitutes an unprecedented global challenge, including to all participating States and Partners for Co-operation, and acknowledge the diverse ways in which the pandemic has had an impact on comprehensive security across the entire OSCE area, in the politico-military, economic and environmental, and human dimensions.

2. We express our condolences to the families of the victims of COVID-19 and our sympathy to those whose lives and livelihoods have been affected by the pandemic. We pay tribute to the efforts made by health and other essential and front line workers in addressing the pandemic through measures to protect the health, safety and well-being of our citizens.

3. We underscore the need for solidarity, unity, transparency and intensified effective international and multilateral co-operation in addressing the COVID-19 pandemic and its consequences, and call upon participating States and other relevant stakeholders to advance, with determination, bold and concerted actions to address its immediate and long-term impacts, in line with the norms and principles enshrined in the Helsinki Final Act and in subsequent OSCE commitments, and Purposes and Principles of the United Nations Charter. We express our support for the role of the OSCE in identifying and facilitating action by participating States to address the impact of the pandemic on our comprehensive security and in assisting international efforts towards peace, including by the United Nations.

4. We recognize that the consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic can affect individuals differently and have a disproportionate impact on the elderly, women, caregivers, youth and children, as well as on persons belonging to national minorities in our States. We acknowledge the need for our responses to the pandemic to take into account instances of discrimination, poverty, exclusion and inequalities, as well as domestic violence, which affects in particular women, children and those more vulnerable to such instances. We acknowledge that emergency measures can have a distinct impact on persons belonging to

religious or belief communities, as well as the positive role those communities play in responding to the pandemic.

5. We applaud the essential contribution of women in COVID-19 response efforts and reaffirm our commitment to promoting the full, equal and meaningful participation of women in our response efforts with the view to achieving gender equality.

6. We call upon participating States to ensure that human rights and fundamental freedoms are respected and protected while combating the COVID-19 pandemic, and that responses to the pandemic comply fully with participating States' obligations under international human rights law and OSCE commitments.

7. We recognize the primary responsibility of participating States in adopting and implementing responses to the pandemic specific to their domestic context. We underscore that states of emergency or other emergency measures, policies and strategies put in place to address the pandemic should be targeted, strictly necessary, transparent, non-discriminatory, proportionate, time-bound and constantly reviewed, and in accordance with participating States' obligations under applicable international human rights law and relevant OSCE commitments.

8. We express deep concern about rising instances of racist, xenophobic, and discriminatory public discourse and acts that appeared in the context of the pandemic, also on the Internet, and in line with relevant OSCE commitments, remain committed to addressing and combating them, including as part of the COVID-19 response.

9. We note with concern reports of some representatives of civil society organizations being threatened and attacked due to their work during, or in relation to, the pandemic. We reaffirm relevant OSCE commitments pertaining to the role and importance of national human rights institutions, where applicable, as well as civil society organizations, and recognize their role in the response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

10. We recognize the importance of the free and transparent flow of information and knowledge in our response to the pandemic and encourage the dissemination of accurate, clear and evidence- and science-based information, bearing in mind the right to freedom of opinion and expression, including the freedom to seek, receive and impart information and ideas of all kinds, regardless of frontiers and through any media. We underline the need to take steps to counter the spread of disinformation, noting with concern that it can mislead, including on the origins and outcomes of the pandemic, cast doubts on the effectiveness of democratic governance, lead to violations of human rights and fundamental freedoms and incite to violence, hatred, discrimination or hostility. We acknowledge the important contribution of independent, free and pluralistic media in disseminating accurate information and countering the spread of disinformation during the pandemic.

11. We note that COVID-19 has caused widespread economic disruption, leading to a severe global economic recession and adversely impacting livelihoods and humanitarian needs across the OSCE area. We acknowledge that the pandemic has had an adverse impact on employment, including that of women and youth, as well as on the realization of social and economic rights. We recognize that participating States dependent on commodities, remittances or tourism have been particularly affected by the measures to contain the pandemic and we underscore the importance of promoting sustainable tourism to support our

recovery. We encourage actions in response to the COVID-19 pandemic that can contribute to the implementation of the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. We strongly encourage that economic recovery measures focus on rebuilding stronger and more resilient economies.

12. We emphasize the importance of environmental protection, including through, *inter alia*, disaster risk reduction and the sustainable use of natural resources, as well as the importance of collaborating across the environment and public health sectors.

13. We are determined to promote digitalization in our recovery, noting how it has already reduced the impact of the pandemic, and acknowledging the importance of the digital economy as a driver for innovation and growth in the OSCE area.

14. We encourage participating States to put in place safeguards where new technologies are used for public health surveillance in response to COVID-19, including purpose limitations and adequate privacy and data protections.

15. We underscore the importance of scientific and technological co-operation in responding to the pandemic, particularly in the health sector, as well as co-operation to prevent, prepare for and respond to zoonotic infections, including those originating from wildlife, with pandemic potential. We note with satisfaction the significant progress on the development and supply of COVID-19 vaccines, vital for human health and security

16. We recognize that corruption, including in the health sector, can reduce the available resources for responding to COVID-19 and we are determined to address it. We underscore the importance of promoting good governance and transparency, to help strengthen trust and accountability in addressing the pandemic.

17. We remain committed to preventing and addressing the increasing risks and challenges in the fight against transnational organized crime, including from the use of ICTs by transnational organized crime groups, stemming from the COVID-19 pandemic and its socio-economic implications.

18. We recognize the considerable impact of the pandemic on border security and management in the OSCE area, and the importance of co-ordinating border services with wider government efforts to protect health, including by ensuring the flow and availability of vital medical and food supplies and other essential goods and services, to combat the pandemic. We will continue to co-operate to enhance our preparedness, in line with relevant OSCE commitments on border security and management.

19. We note the pause on the conduct of verification activities, including under the auspices of the Vienna Document 2011, due to the unprecedented conditions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. This affects military stability, predictability and transparency in the OSCE area. We encourage work towards their earliest possible resumption, taking into account the public health situation.

20. We recognize the significant impact of the pandemic on OSCE activities. We acknowledge that in response to the public health situation in the OSCE area, executive structures have had to adapt or suspend temporarily their monitoring and observation activities, where applicable, which affected in particular those executive structures which

could not perform fully their activities by working remotely. We underscore that the safety and security of OSCE staff and duty of care are of utmost importance.

21. We welcome and encourage the adaptability of the OSCE in using digital platforms to maintain and promote dialogue, ensure timely decision-making and continue implementation of all mandates. We value sustained efforts by the OSCE executive structures to respond to requests for assistance by participating States to support them in combating the pandemic, including by facilitating co-operation, sharing of best practices, and assisting in the implementation of OSCE commitments in these extraordinary circumstances.

22. We encourage continued co-operation among the participating States, Partners for Co-operation, the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, OSCE executive structures, and all relevant stakeholders, to help further support the development and implementation of our responses to the pandemic.