

**STATEMENT BY THE EUROPEAN UNION AT THE
1118th MEETING OF THE OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

10 November 2016

**In response to the Co-Chairmen of the Minsk Group,
the Personal Representative of the OSCE Chairperson-in-Office on the
Conflict Dealt with by the OSCE Minsk Conference and the
Head of the High-Level Planning Group**

The European Union welcomes the Co-Chairmen of the Minsk Group, Ambassadors Igor Popov, James Warlick and Pierre Andrieu, the Personal Representative of the OSCE Chairperson-in-Office on the Conflict Dealt with by the OSCE Minsk Conference, Ambassador Andrzej Kasprzyk, and the Head of the High-Level Planning Group (HPLG), Colonel Hans Lampalzer, and thanks them for their detailed reports. It also welcomes the new French Co-Chairman, Ambassador Stéphane Visconti.

The European Union continues to closely monitor the development of the situation in Nagorno-Karabakh. The year 2016 has seen a resurgence of tensions on the ground, with the use of heavy artillery and civilian targets. This violence culminated in early April in the resumption of fighting along the line of contact. All told, this past year will have seen the largest number of victims since the 1994 ceasefire agreement. These developments are extremely worrying.

We reiterate our condemnation of any use of force and call on the parties concerned to avoid any activities that might heighten tensions. To that end, we urge the parties to strictly observe the ceasefire they have agreed to, to refrain from forays anywhere along the line of contact and to exercise restraint both on the ground and in their public statements.

We hope that the relative calm we have observed on the ground for the past six months will at least continue.

The European Union reiterates its support for the Minsk Group and reconfirms its full confidence that the Co-Chairmen will continue to seek a fair and lasting political settlement of the conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh, which it considers vital for the future of the region. We invite the parties to seek a path of constructive dialogue and encourage them to take advantage more of the efforts of the Co-Chairmen.

In that regard, the European Union emphasizes the repeated commitment by the Presidents of Armenia and Azerbaijan in favour of the ceasefire and a peaceful settlement of the conflict. It calls for the full implementation of the confidence-building measures agreed

by the Armenian and Azerbaijani Presidents at the meeting in Vienna on 16 May 2016 and the summit in St. Petersburg on 20 June 2016. It advocates the setting up of an inquiry mechanism, the enlargement of the office of the Personal Representative and the continued exchange of information on missing persons under the aegis of the International Committee of the Red Cross. The European Union believes that the enlargement of the office of the Personal Representative should be accompanied by an intensification of the monitoring carried out by him and his office. It considers it essential, in parallel to the confidence-building measures, that progress be made on the fundamental aspects of the dossier and calls on the parties to pursue substantive conflict settlement negotiations with renewed energy and in a spirit of good faith and compromise.

In order to make progress on all of these aspects, to resume dialogue without delay and to re-establish a climate of confidence, we invite the parties to create the conditions for a new meeting. The idea of a ministerial meeting on the margins of the OSCE Ministerial Council in December in Hamburg might be worth considering.

The European Union repeats its commitment to a peaceful settlement of the conflict on the basis of the principles underlying the Charter of the United Nations and the Helsinki Final Act. It recognizes the untenable and dangerous nature of the present situation and urges that progress be made towards the drafting of a comprehensive peace treaty.

The European Union is willing to offer increased support to efforts to settle the conflict through the European Union Special Representative Herbert Salber and in the framework of the implementation of confidence-building measures and the cultivation of personal contacts in support of and complementary to the Minsk Group.

Mr. Chairperson,

We should like to make known our positive appreciation for the work carried out, sometimes under difficult security conditions, by the Personal Representative of the OSCE Chairperson-in-Office on the Conflict Dealt with by the OSCE Minsk Conference, Ambassador Andrzej Kasprzyk, and his team. The European Union attaches the greatest importance to the continuation without obstacles of their ceasefire monitoring activities on the line of contact and along the border between Armenia and Azerbaijan. These activities help without a doubt to reduce tensions in the region and are a valuable instrument for implementing confidence-building measures on the ground. The enlargement of the Personal Representative's office would be an important step towards building trust between the parties and advancing the conflict settlement process.

The European Union reiterates its support for the plans to deploy an OSCE peacekeeping mission for the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. This will depend, however, on the conclusion of a comprehensive agreement by the parties on the basis of the principles identified for a peaceful settlement of the conflict under the aegis of the Minsk Group. We are in favour of the participation by members of the HPLG in the Personal Representative's monitoring activities and, if the political situation allows, a reconnaissance visit on the ground. The comprehensive OSCE approach advocated by the HPLG involving several OSCE sectors could help improve the planning activities.

In conclusion, the European Union reaffirms its full support for the mediation conducted by the Co-Chairmen of the Minsk Group, the activities of Ambassador Kasprzyk

and the HPLG. All of these processes, which should be co-ordinated, contribute to achieving a peaceful settlement of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. The European Union also reiterates its commitment to work closely with the parties to promote stability and prosperity, to consolidate democracy and the rule of law in the region and to strengthen its co-operative relations with them, in particular in the framework of the Eastern Partnership.

Finally, on the occasion of Ambassador Andrieu's last statement to the Permanent Council, we should like to thank him for his dedication during the past two and a half years. We wish him every success in his future position and look forward to working closely with his successor.

The candidate countries the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Albania¹, the Stabilisation and Association Process country and potential candidate country Bosnia and Herzegovina, the European Free Trade Association countries and members of the European Economic Area Liechtenstein and Norway, as well as Ukraine, the Republic of Moldova and San Marino, align themselves with this statement.

1 The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Albania continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.