



## **EUROPEAN UNION**

### **28<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the OSCE Ministerial Council Stockholm 2-3 December 2021**

#### **EU Opening Statement Remarks by HRVP Josep Borrell**

Dear friends,

First of all, warm thanks to the Swedish Chairperson-in-Office, Minister Ann Linde, for her leadership under the extraordinarily difficult circumstances that we are facing. And my best wishes to the incoming Polish Chairmanship-in-Office.

Let me start my intervention by stressing that the European Union supports strongly the OSCE and it is part of our unconditional commitment to promote multilateralism, based on international law.

The European Union considers the OSCE principles and commitments, in particular the Helsinki Final Act and the Paris Charter, as pillars of the European security architecture. And in spite of all difficulties, the OSCE remains the key forum to address security challenges in the region.

However, this vision is currently challenged, and the atmosphere within the OSCE is more and more confrontational, as also evidenced by the fact that only very few texts will be adopted by this Council.

Regrettably, 30 years after the Paris Charter, we cannot but observe that the hopes and guidance contained therein have not materialised. Today we are facing a continent riddled with conflicts, where wounds not only have not healed, but remain open, and the principles for cooperation, on which our security should be based, are too often ignored.

I am particularly concerned with the continued situation in Ukraine, the annexation of Crimea, including the recent military build-up by Russia near the border. The European Union is unwavering in its support to Ukraine's independence, unity, sovereignty and territorial integrity within its internationally recognised border.

In Belarus, repression and human rights violations are continuing. The European Union stays united to terminate the migration crisis orchestrated at our borders by Lukashenko's regime. Exploiting vulnerable people for political purposes is unacceptable and must stop.

For Nagorno-Karabakh, we urge both sides to respect the ceasefire. The European Union supports and is ready to complement the efforts of the OSCE Minsk Group towards a negotiated, comprehensive and sustainable settlement.

We also support the existing formats of negotiations in Georgia, through the Geneva International Discussions, and in the Republic of Moldova, with the Transnistrian Settlement Process. We, therefore, welcome the adoption of the Ministerial Statement on the '5+2' format.

Stability in the whole OSCE area is our strategic priority. In Central Asia, the aftermaths of the situation in Afghanistan affect us all. We support the OSCE's engagement to address these implications.

In the Western Balkans, the European Union integration and enlargement perspective remain strong tools for pushing forward positive change.

In order to increase military stability, transparency and predictability, we continue supporting the modernisation of the OSCE politico-military toolbox, including the Vienna Document.

Madam Chairperson, dear friends, the OSCE's comprehensive approach to security through all three dimensions is particularly relevant today. Now, more than ever, it is necessary to strengthen the effectiveness and the efficiency of the OSCE, including ensuring a timely adoption of the OSCE budget. The European Union supports the efforts of the Secretary General in that regard.

Recent developments in our neighbourhood and beyond, prove that the fundamentals of our common understanding about peace and security in the world are broken – just broken. It is our common responsibility to restore the trust lost and to renew the efforts on opportunities missed.

I call on all of us to consider how we could work in that direction, instead of heading towards deeper confrontation and increasingly a wider gap in our understanding about the fundamentals on which our interaction is based.

We must do so for the benefit of our citizens and for the future of our new generations.

Thank you Madam President, thank you to all of you for your attention.