

PC.DEL/712/18

8 June 2018

ENGLISH

Original: FRENCH

## **STATEMENT BY THE EUROPEAN UNION AT THE 1188th MEETING OF THE OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

7 June 2018

### **In response to the Head of the OSCE Programme Office in Bishkek and the Director of the OSCE Academy in Bishkek**

The European Union and its Member States would like to welcome Ambassador Pierre von Arx on the occasion of his second report to the Permanent Council, and Mr. Alexander Wolters, Director of the OSCE Academy in Bishkek.

As a long-standing partner of Kyrgyzstan, the European Union supports the Kyrgyz Government in its progress towards democracy, the rule of law, sustainable socio-economic development, good governance and respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. The visit to Bishkek by Federica Mogherini, High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, in November 2017, and that of President Sooronbay Jeenbekov to Brussels in April 2018 bear witness to the quality of this partnership.

In our opinion, Central Asia should remain a priority for the OSCE. The European Union is pleased to note that the Consultative Mechanism put in place during mandate negotiations is seen by the Programme Office in Bishkek as useful and effective and considers it important that the Office continue to conduct its activities in the three dimensions, giving the same weight to each of them. We emphasize the role played by international personnel in local capacity-building. Although aware of the high quality of local personnel, we are in favour of maintaining a significant international presence within the Programme Office. In spite of the closure of the office in Osh, which we regret, we believe it essential that the Programme Office's work be continued throughout the entire country.

Regarding the politico-military dimension, the European Union recognizes the importance of issues related to transnational threats and border security. We advocate increased co-ordination with the European Union on these questions and with the OSCE Border Management Staff College in Dushanbe. Countering violent extremism and radicalization leading to terrorism is also an essential element of the Programme Office's work, which we fully support. The European Union also welcomes the Office's activities to establish an Advance Passenger Information System for air travel.

In the economic and environmental dimension, we support the emphasis placed on good governance, and combating corruption and money laundering, and we welcome the opening of a third Aarhus Centre in the Issyk-Kul region. We nevertheless urge the Office to

concentrate on areas in which the OSCE offers genuine added value and to avoid duplication of the work of other international organizations.

In the human dimension, we encourage the Office to continue working to promote human rights and fundamental freedoms and we appreciate the expertise provided to the Kyrgyz authorities in judicial reform. We welcome the major involvement of Kyrgyzstan at the Human Dimension Implementation Meeting last September but regret the fact that Kyrgyzstan dropped nine places in the 2018 World Press Freedom Index established by Reporters Without Borders. We are closely monitoring the situation in the country in that context and urge the Office to elaborate additional media support activities. We also hope that it will continue its excellent work in combating trafficking in human beings.

We welcome the support provided by the Programme Office to the authorities in their preparation for the presidential election on 15 October 2017. We encourage it to continue its activities in the framework of the current electoral reform process. We take this opportunity to call on Kyrgyzstan to implement the recommendations contained in the final report by the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights election observation mission.

The OSCE Academy in Bishkek is a flagship project by the Organization. It enjoys an excellent reputation in the region and helps to strengthen security and regional co-operation in Central Asia and with Afghanistan. We welcomed the opportunity this week in Vienna to meet former students who have benefited from the training offered by the Academy. At the same time the fact that it is supported for the most part by extrabudgetary financing jeopardizes its sustainability in the long term. For that reason, we strongly recommend the inclusion of a larger part of the Academy's activities in the Unified Budget.

We welcome the planned review activities and would like to know whether the Programme Office envisages a strategy, for example, over a five-year period.

Finally, we call on the Kyrgyz authorities to comply with their financial commitments within the OSCE and exempt field mission staff from taxation or pay back the taxes collected to the Unified Budget.

In conclusion, we should like to thank the Ambassador and his team for the work they have performed.

The candidate countries the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia<sup>1</sup>, Montenegro<sup>1</sup>, Serbia<sup>1</sup> and Albania<sup>1</sup>, the country of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidate Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Free Trade Association country and member of the European Economic Area Liechtenstein, as well as Georgia, align themselves with this statement.

---

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