



EUROPEAN UNION

OSCE Permanent Council No. 1285 Vienna, 15 October 2020

EU Statement in response to the Report by the Head of the OSCE Mission in Kosovo, Ambassador Jan Braathu

The European Union and its Member States warmly welcome Ambassador Jan Braathu back to the Permanent Council.

We reiterate our resolute support for the valuable work carried out by the OSCE Mission in Kosovo. The Mission has established itself as a trusted partner of all communities and contributes to a safe and secure, as well as democratic, prosperous and multi-ethnic Kosovo*, based on respect for human rights, fundamental freedoms and the rule of law, including the rights of persons belonging to minorities. We applaud you for that.

The European Union welcomes the Mission's engagement on a wide range of important activities, thus further intensifying its "whole-of-Mission" approach that stands on three key programmatic pillars: human rights and communities, democratization, and security and public safety. This encompasses, *inter alia*, the promotion of human rights, rule of law, democratization through the support for democratic institutions and civic participation in the decision-making process, as well as an efficient and democratic security and public safety sector. These areas remain of importance, in light of the findings and recommendations of the 2020 Kosovo report published last week.

We are fully cognizant of the fact that this reporting period was particularly challenging due to COVID-19. While the pandemic curtailed the scope of some activities, the Mission remained engaged with local stakeholders and responded to requests for assistance. We commend you for that.

* This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSCR 1244/1999 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence.

We reiterate our appreciation for the Mission's tireless promotion of inter-community cooperation aiming at enhancing community relations. We also welcome the monitoring of, and support for, Kosovo institutions' performance in improving inter-community relations and in responding to and addressing security incidents affecting persons belonging to minorities, and vulnerable groups.

We furthermore welcome the Mission's sustained work in assisting stakeholders to exercise their duties effectively, offering support and expertise to enhance compliance with good governance and the highest international human rights standards. Improving the accountability and transparency of institutions remains especially important in that regard. We welcome in particular the cooperation between the EU and the Mission on the ground to strengthen Kosovo's electoral process.

In addition, strengthening coordination with stakeholders relating to the protection of rights of persons belonging to minorities, along with the protection of their cultural and religious heritage, including the Special Protective Zones, should remain high on the Mission's long-term agenda. We also welcome the numerous activities involving youth and look forward to increased cooperation with the Regional Youth Cooperation Office (RYCO).

We will maintain our strong support for the consolidation of rule of law and socio-economic development of Kosovo for the benefit of all, including through very concrete financial and technical assistance. This was reconfirmed also in the context of COVID-19 as the EU has provided support to the people in Kosovo: 5 million euros for urgent medical equipment, 62 million euros for socio-economic recovery measures, and up to 100 million euros in loans aiming to help limit the economic fallout of the pandemic in the medium term.

We wholeheartedly welcome that the EU-facilitated Dialogue between Belgrade and Pristina resumed with high-level meetings in July and September. A number of expert level meetings also took place. Both sides now must build on this positive momentum and make additional substantial efforts, with the aim of reaching a comprehensive

legally-binding agreement. Such an agreement is urgent and crucial for both in order to advance on their respective European paths, in line with the European perspective of the region.

In conclusion, with a strong interest in the political and security consolidation in the region, and having the highest stakes in the outcome, the European Union remains determined to continue to assist Kosovo on its path towards lasting stability. This is why we highly value the work carried out by the OSCE Mission in Kosovo. We would therefore like to thank once again Ambassador Braathu and assure him and his capable team of the European Union's continued support.

The Candidate Countries REPUBLIC of NORTH MACEDONIA*, MONTENEGRO* and ALBANIA*, the Country of the Stabilisation and Association Process and Potential Candidate BOSNIA and HERZEGOVINA, and the EFTA countries ICELAND and LIECHTENSTEIN, members of the European Economic Area, as well as GEORGIA align themselves with this statement.

* Republic of North Macedonia, Montenegro and Albania continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.