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**EU statement in Response to the Report by the Head of the  
OSCE Centre in Ashgabat, Ambassador Natalya Drozd**

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The European Union welcomes Ambassador Natalya Drozd to the Permanent Council and thanks her for the comprehensive report.

The EU Strategy for Central Asia frames our engagement with the region, in which Turkmenistan is an important partner country. Since the last report, we carefully followed developments in Turkmenistan, such as the revision of the Constitution and the Presidential election. The EU stands ready to work with Turkmen authorities to step up its current engagement with the country's government and its people, including through the OSCE.

The OSCE field presences are an important tool to the benefit of the host country. We welcome the enhanced and constructive interaction between the Centre and the Government of Turkmenistan, and further encourage a deepening of activities in all three dimensions, facilitating the implementation of OSCE commitments. We also welcome the cooperation with other OSCE and international actors, including the EU, in planning and implementing programmatic activities.

A stable, secure and prosperous region is in our common interest and we therefore welcome the focus on border security and management in the Politico-Military Dimension, including countering terrorism and enhancing aviation and travel document security. We commend the work that led to Turkmenistan's decision to join the ICAO's PKD, and activities on enhancing border patrolling, including the first ever joint Turkmen – Afghan training, also in cooperation with the UNDP-implemented EU Border Management Northern Afghanistan (EU – BOMNAF) project. Implementing

the OSCE Border Security and Management Concept and using the Border Management Staff College's training facilities should remain areas of focus.

In the Economic and Environmental Dimension, we welcome the continuation of activities in the areas of good governance, with a view to support Turkmenistan in implementing its long-term international commitments to combating corruption, money laundering and terrorist financing. We commend the support to the functioning of the Good Governance Resource Centre at the Ministry of Finance, as well as the practice of introducing Turkmen authorities to international experiences in the field. We encourage continuing activities in the areas of energy security and implementation of the Aarhus Convention.

In the Human Dimension, we support activities aimed at promoting the implementation of OSCE principles and commitments in the area of human rights and fundamental freedoms, as well as those in support of civil society. Much remains to be done for Turkmenistan to fully implement its commitments. We count on Turkmenistan's further participation in the Human Dimension Implementation Meeting in order to engage with civil society representatives and we call on Turkmen authorities to allow the development of independent civil society organisations in the country.

We encourage further cooperation of the Center with ODIHR and RFoM. In this context, we would like to welcome the invitation extended to ODIHR to observe the latest Presidential election and we call on Turkmenistan to implement the concrete recommendations included in the final report of the Election Assessment Mission. We thus look forward to the Centre's seminar on election standards. We support the Centre continuing its activities with regard to media, in particular media freedom, media pluralism, editorial independence and online journalism, as well as those related to the rule of law and independence of judiciary, freedom of religion or belief, gender equality and combating domestic violence.

We support the Centre's continued focus in the area of penitentiary reform, including with the view of ensuring international standards related to prisoners' rights. We encourage the Center to continue to be involved in visiting detention facilities, and we

count on the readiness of Turkmenistan to further facilitate such visits in the future. We remain concerned about continued reports about the use of torture in detention. We acknowledge that some information was given with respect to the situation of prisoners. We continue to request in our bilateral dialogue information on the status and locations of prisoners who have disappeared in detention and to raise specific individual cases. We also attach great importance to the freedom of movement and we encourage Turkmenistan to permit citizens to travel freely in and out of the country.

The EU remains concerned about the serious shortcomings in human rights and fundamental freedoms in Turkmenistan. We welcome the adoption of the Law on the Ombudsman as a positive development, and the election of a female as the first ever Ombudsperson in the country. While acknowledging these efforts put into adopting a National Action Plan in the field of Human Rights, we underline that there still is a significant gap between the legislative framework and its practical implementation.

In conclusion, we would like to wish success to Ambassador Drozd and her staff in their work and recall that the EU and its Member States stand ready to continue their support to the activity of the Centre and to enhancing the OSCE's field activities in Central Asia.

The Candidate Countries the FORMER YUGOSLAV REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA\*, MONTENEGRO\*, SERBIA\* and ALBANIA\*, the Country of the Stabilisation and Association Process and Potential Candidate BOSNIA and HERZEGOVINA, and the EFTA countries ICELAND, LIECHTENSTEIN and NORWAY align themselves with this statement.

\* The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Albania continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.