



EUROPEAN UNION

OSCE Permanent Council No. 1455 Vienna, 7 December 2023

EU Statement in response to the End of Year Report by the Special Representative of the OSCE Chairperson-in- Office on Combatting Corruption, Prof. Anita Ramasastry

1. The European Union warmly welcomes Special Representative Professor Anita Ramasastry to the Permanent Council and thanks her for her report.
2. As we have heard, the risks of corruption have been exacerbated not only by the COVID-19 pandemic but also by economic recovery measures, the transition to the green economy, and food insecurity as a consequence of Russia's ongoing war of aggression against Ukraine. Corruption erodes trust in institutions and is highly damaging to the economy and society as a whole. Moreover, corruption facilitates organised crime and has a negative impact on security and stability at all levels, including on the enjoyment and realisation of human rights.
3. These are strong reasons to maintain anti-corruption measures and tools high on the agenda of our deliberations and as a priority for the work of the OSCE. Fighting corruption demands commitment, perseverance and determination. To be credible we need to start at home. We reiterate that there is no room for corruption in the EU or any of its institutions and that decisive actions are taken against any allegations of corruption. The EU reiterates its strong commitment to the fight against corruption at all levels, as a fundamental pillar for upholding the rule of law in the OSCE area and beyond. We also want to highlight the nexus between gender

and corruption and the need to integrate a gender perspective in anti-corruption work.

4. The new EU Anti-corruption Package, presented by the European Commission in May this year, includes several measures to prevent and combat corruption. Apart from the legislative proposals to harmonise criminal sanctions and enhance the effective prosecution of corruption, the package focuses on preventive measures with the aim of building a culture of integrity and enhancing transparency and accountability in the public sector. In May this year, the Council of the EU also approved Conclusions highlighting the importance of incorporating a strong anti-corruption perspective into all development efforts, and called on Member States to increase efforts to tackle illicit financial flows (IFFs), including funds obtained through corrupt practices.
5. Good governance and the absence of corruption contribute to better-integrated economies that are more inclusive and sustainable, and are essential prerequisites for generating a good investment climate. Transparency and anti-corruption measures are key in a safe and responsible economic recovery. Therefore, anti-corruption is an important component of the EU Recovery and Resilience Plans that have built-in mechanisms to prevent any kind of fraud, corruption and conflict of interest. In relation to this, we appreciate your support in disseminating the OCEEA Guide on best practices on good governance that can have a positive impact on the overall business climate and support rising economic prosperity.
6. We attach great importance to the promotion of good governance and the fight against corruption in our neighbourhood policy, as well as in the accession process to the EU. Indeed, clear progress in the prevention and fight against corruption is essential for advancing towards EU membership.
7. Furthermore, we reiterate our support for the engagement of civil society in preventing and fighting corruption and would like to highlight the important work of the Aarhus Centres in addressing environmental challenges at the local level, particularly in relation to the risks of corruption in the renewable energy sector,

where a high level of transparency is crucial. Building on the Aarhus Convention, the Aarhus Centres focus on dialogue between civil society, the private sector, and governments to raise awareness, build capacity, and facilitate political dialogue. They have proven to be one of the most powerful instruments in improving environmental democracy, accountability, and law enforcement, all of which are particularly useful in the fight against corruption. The 2023 Aarhus Centres Annual Meeting, held in Dushanbe in October, provided an excellent opportunity to foster discussions and enhance the engagement of Aarhus Centres in advancing effective environmental governance across diverse domains.

8. Finally, we reiterate our support for the OSCE's autonomous institutions, field missions and the Secretariat's valuable work done in this field. Furthermore, we would like to highlight the continuous support of many EU Member States for the OSCE's anti-corruption projects through extensive additional financial contributions, as well as through their expertise. We look forward to the results of the projects that provide support to the Republic of Moldova, Georgia and Ukraine in combating the illegal use of virtual assets and cryptocurrencies, and combating corruption, by providing recommendations for possible legislative amendments and through the provision of special trainings.

The Candidate Countries NORTH MACEDONIA*, MONTENEGRO*, SERBIA*, ALBANIA*, UKRAINE, the REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA, and BOSNIA and HERZEGOVINA*, the Potential Candidate Country GEORGIA, and the EFTA countries ICELAND, LIECHTENSTEIN and NORWAY, members of the European Economic Area, as well as ANDORRA and SAN MARINO align themselves with this statement.

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