



EUROPEAN UNION

OSCE Permanent Council (Special) No. 1350 Vienna, 13 January 2022

EU Statement in response to the Address by the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Poland, Mr Zbigniew Rau

1. The European Union warmly congratulates Poland on the assumption of the OSCE Chairmanship and would like to thank Minister Rau for his presentation of Poland's priorities as Chair-in-Office in 2022.
2. Over the past years, the role of the OSCE Chair has become ever more challenging as our region experiences a rising number of attacks on the rules-based international order, which are undermining our security and effective multilateralism. Aggressive actions have taken place, and continue, despite our collective commitments. Armed conflict continues in the OSCE region, particularly in Ukraine, and unresolved conflicts endure in Georgia and the Republic of Moldova. The same goes for the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. The EU supports your intention, Minister Rau, to ensure that efforts to resolve existing conflicts in a peaceful, comprehensive and sustainable manner remain the top priority of the OSCE agenda. We hope to see tangible progress in this field, with a view to strengthening the overall security in the OSCE region and bringing real improvements to the conflict-affected populations. In these efforts, we stand by the core principles on which European security is built, enshrined in the Helsinki Final Act and the Paris Charter, notably: the sovereignty and territorial integrity of States; the inviolability of internationally recognised borders; the freedom of countries to decide their foreign policy and to choose their own security arrangements and; refraining from the threat or use of force. These principles are neither negotiable nor subject to revision or re-interpretation. Their violation is the greatest obstacle to a common, indivisible security space in the OSCE region.

3. To strengthen peace and security in the OSCE area, respect for the fundamental principles and commitments enshrined in our founding documents as well as their implementation by all 57 participating States are key. The EU believes that dialogue, transparency and cooperation are the only means to overcome disputes and ensure sustainable peace. The EU is ready to engage in a constructive discussion on security in Europe based on international law, UN obligations and OSCE commitments. Such a discussion must be comprehensive in content, inclusive and take into account the concerns and interests of all stakeholders. The OSCE is the most appropriate platform for a meaningful dialogue in good faith on every aspect related to comprehensive security and we express our readiness to contribute constructively, make the most of its toolbox and reinforce its existing acquis. We express our support for the Polish Chair to swiftly find ways and a fitting format to engage in a substantial discussion with all participating States. Let us be clear: there cannot be a decision on the security in Europe without all the European states at the table.
4. The OSCE remains the essential platform to discuss conventional arms control in Europe. We are strongly committed to full implementation and further development of the existing commitments in the OSCE's politico-military dimension and welcome your goals of increasing military transparency and enhancing confidence-building measures. We are part of the majority of participating States supporting the modernisation of the Vienna Document. We also highly value the Structured Dialogue, which we are ready to develop further in accordance with the Hamburg Declaration. OSCE activities to implement the Women, Peace, and Security agenda must also be strengthened. It is imperative women have full, equal, and meaningful participation in the armed and security forces and be included at all levels of decision-making processes in conflict resolution and peace processes, as well as in the security sector. We also welcome your focus on non-military security issues, in particular cybersecurity, counterterrorism, fighting corruption and transnational organised crime, as well as on border security and management.
5. We support the Chair's focus within the Second Dimension on inclusivity and sustainability. Greening the economy, protecting biodiversity, enhancing sustainable use of natural resources and developing sustainable connectivity are key elements for our recovery. We welcome that the interconnectedness of resilient

economies and environment is highlighted and that balance of economic and environmental topics will be ensured. Committed to implement the Glasgow Climate Pact, we support building upon the Stockholm MC Decision on Climate Change to address climate-related security challenges together.

6. We deplore that the Covid-19 pandemic and ill-perceived security threats, are too often used to justify legislation stifling independent media, civil society, and human rights defenders. Lasting security cannot be sustained without respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, democracy and the rule of law. Promoting and mainstreaming gender equality throughout all dimensions is also an important aspect of advancing the OSCE's concept of comprehensive security. We welcome the special attention that the CiO will pay to the young generation and the promotion of freedom of religion or belief. Civil society is an essential partner when it comes to implementation and we therefore remain firm about safeguarding the open and inclusive character of the OSCE in relation to civil society organizations.
7. We strongly welcome the Polish Chairmanship's intention to steadfastly support the OSCE's autonomous institutions: ODIHR, HCNM and RFOM. It is the responsibility of all of us to preserve the institutions and their strong mandates, and ensure their proper functioning. We also support the efforts of the Polish CiO to find a consensus soon on the OSCE Unified Budget and on long-term and fair scales of contributions in order to provide the Organization with the necessary resources to fulfil its tasks.
8. Today, Europe's security is under threat. Russia's actions, in particular the illegal annexation of Crimea, its acts of aggression in eastern Ukraine as well as its destabilising role in the Georgian regions of South Ossetia and Abkhazia, in the Transnistrian region of the Republic of Moldova as well as in its support to the Lukashenka regime in Belarus, have led to a severe deterioration of the security situation in the OSCE area. Most recently, the ongoing massive military build-up of Russia at its borders with Ukraine, in the illegally annexed Crimea and in the Black Sea is deeply worrying. Together with our transatlantic and likeminded partners, the EU has repeatedly emphasised that any further aggression against Ukraine will come with massive consequences and a high economic cost for Russia. The EU urges Russia to deescalate tensions and ensure transparency with regards to these activities on the basis of agreed OSCE instruments. Reiterating our full support for

Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity, we encourage diplomatic efforts and support the Normandy format in achieving the full implementation of the Minsk Agreements. The OSCE Special Monitoring Mission in Ukraine must be granted full, safe and unhindered access to the whole territory of Ukraine within its internationally recognized borders.

9. Let me conclude by reiterating the EU's support to the Polish Chair to swiftly initiate a substantial discussion with all participating States on all relevant aspects related to the comprehensive security in the OSCE area. We look forward to your Chairmanship's active political leadership of the OSCE in this endeavour, and assure you of the EU's cooperation. We wish you every success.

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

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