



EUROPEAN UNION

**OSCE Permanent Council Nr 1000
Vienna, 15 May 2014**

**EU Statement in Reply to the OSCE Project Co-ordinator in
Uzbekistan,
H.E. Ambassador György Szabó**

The EU warmly welcomes H.E. Ambassador Szabó to the Permanent Council and thanks him for his comprehensive report.

We support the Project Co-ordinator's close dialogue with the host government and other relevant stakeholders on project activities across all three dimensions, designed to assist Uzbekistan in meeting its OSCE commitments and pursuing its reform and democratization agenda. We particularly welcome the agreement to increase the number of local staff positions by two new project officers. We also appreciate steps towards aligning the mechanism for agreeing projects to the overall OSCE programme planning cycle. This should help to improve the project implementation and efficiency.

We commend the Project Co-ordinator's active contribution to the enhancement of co-operation between Uzbekistan and various OSCE Institutions and Executive Structures. One example is the recent visit of the Special Representative and Coordinator for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings, Ms. Maria Grazia Giammarinaro, to Uzbekistan, as well as the planned follow-up visit of the Acting Special Representative this year. In view of the forthcoming elections in Uzbekistan in 2014 and 2015, we call for an increased interaction between the host authorities and the ODIHR in order to use its expertise and to strengthen the institutional capacity of the Central Election Commission and the Legislative Chamber of the Parliament.

The EU attaches great importance to Project Co-ordinator's efforts to encourage and facilitate participation of non-governmental and media representatives in OSCE events and international trainings. We welcome the focus on activities in the regions, contributing to the formation of the civil society.

We support the Project Co-ordinator's assistance to Uzbekistan in addressing transnational threats and challenges, including in the fight against terrorism and illegal drug trafficking. We underline the importance of regional co-operation and co-ordination with relevant international actors, specifically with regard to the post-2014 developments in Afghanistan. In this respect, we welcome Uzbekistan's hosting of an ICAO regional seminar on travel document security last month, and the support given by the Project Coordinator.

In the Economic and Environmental Dimension, the EU particularly appreciates activities pertaining to good governance and the rule of law, such as projects on combating money laundering and the financing of terrorism, as well as the fight against corruption and efforts to promote environmental awareness.

In the Human Dimension, we highly value the Project Co-ordinator's expert support with regard to the National Action Plan on how to implement the recommendations of the UN Universal Periodic Review. We also attach great importance to the assistance in bringing national legislation in line with the UN Convention against Torture. We continue to support the Project Co-ordinator's focus on human rights education and practical training for the police and judiciary, assistance to the Ombudsperson Institution and its co-operation with the civil society and NGOs, as well as efforts to enhance media freedom.

With regard to cross-dimensional issues, we highly value the Project Co-ordinator's assistance in combating human trafficking, focusing on capacity building and prevention.

The EU remains concerned about the human rights situation in Uzbekistan and its non-compliance with several OSCE Human Dimension commitments, notably with regard to freedom of assembly and association, freedom of expression and freedom of the media. We consider work in these and other areas related to human rights and fundamental freedoms particularly relevant in Uzbekistan.

The EU stands ready to continue its co-operation with the government of Uzbekistan in a comprehensive way. We reiterate the importance we attach to the EU – Uzbek dialogue in the various existing formats.

We would like to take this opportunity to call on Uzbekistan to pay its contribution, and its arrears, to the OSCE's Unified Budget and to reconsider the issue of taxation of local staff salaries in the Project Co-ordinator's Office.

In conclusion, the EU would like to thank Ambassador Szabó and his team for their dedicated work and wish them success in their future activities.

The Candidate Countries the FORMER YUGOSLAV REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA*, MONTENEGRO*, ICELAND+ and SERBIA*, the Countries of the Stabilisation and Association Process and Potential Candidates ALBANIA and BOSNIA and HERZEGOVINA, and the EFTA countries LIECHTENSTEIN and NORWAY, members of the European Economic Area, as well as the REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA align themselves with this statement.

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

+ Iceland continues to be a member of the EFTA and of the European Economic Area.