



EUROPEAN UNION

OSCE Permanent Council 1415 Vienna, 16 March 2023

EU Statement in response to the report of the ODIHR Director, Matteo Mecacci

1. The European Union warmly welcomes Director Matteo Mecacci back to the Permanent Council and thanks him for his report. Mr. Mecacci, we thank you for your professionalism, integrity, and impartiality in fulfilling the Office's mandate. Our appreciation goes also to the ODIHR staff for their dedicated service.
2. As we meet today, Russia continues its illegal, unjustifiable and unprovoked full-scale war of aggression against Ukraine. More than 13 million people had to leave their homes, including nearly 8 million refugees staying across Europe and more than 5 million internally displaced within Ukraine. The dire humanitarian and human rights situation caused by the Russian aggression requires a resolute response from the international community.
3. We express our gratitude for ODIHR's prompt action in this regard. The Office demonstrated its ability and commitment to adapt to and to effectively implement its mandate in this extremely challenging situation.
4. We highly appreciate the important Ukraine Human Rights Monitoring Initiative through which ODIHR monitors and documents violations of human rights and international humanitarian law standards. The two interim reports presented so far clearly demonstrate the devastating impact of the ongoing war on the human security of the people of Ukraine and provide significant evidence of violations of international humanitarian law (IHL) and international human rights law (IHRL) committed by the Russian Federation. We look forward to following up the reports to be presented in 2023.

5. We also thank ODIHR for providing technical assistance to the three expert missions deployed under the Moscow Mechanism in the course of 2022. The expert reports helped to establish the facts surrounding the violations of IHL and IHRL in Ukraine, as a consequence of Russia's war of aggression, as well as the dire human rights situation in Russia.
6. We trust that both the reports of the ODIHR's monitoring initiative as well as the Moscow Mechanism reports will feed into international accountability efforts. We reiterate that there will be no impunity: the perpetrators of any war crimes, crimes against humanity and other atrocity crimes must and will be held accountable according to international law.

7. Mr. Director,

ODIHR's work and its assistance to the participating States, as well as to the OSCE field missions across the broad scope of our joint Human Dimension commitments remain vital. We welcome the Office's continued efforts to support human rights defenders and National Human Rights Institutions in the OSCE area, as well as the continuing work on torture prevention and freedom of assembly and association. We value the expert guidance, including through legal opinions, that ODIHR has continued to offer to the participating States on ensuring the rule of law and the independence of the judiciary, respecting human rights and fundamental freedoms, strengthening democratic institutions, increasing the political participation of women, as well as on ensuring inclusive and diverse societies by promoting tolerance and combating multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination, including by preventing and combating hate crimes, promoting gender equality and combating sexual and gender-based violence.

8. We underline the importance of ODIHR's role in securing a platform for civil society representatives and human rights defenders to interact with national authorities, ensuring their voices are heard. We thank you for assisting the Polish 2022 OSCE Chair in organising the Warsaw Human Dimension Conference and reiterate our regret that no consensus could be reached on the holding of the HDIM in the past years. Exchanges with civil society representatives are vital for upholding our commitments. We look forward to upcoming Human Dimension events this year and

remind that it is our joint commitment to hold them and a responsibility of all participating States to reach consensus and adopt necessary decisions.

9. Election observation is a valuable tool for the promotion of democracy and respect for human rights in the OSCE area. We acknowledge the crucial role of ODIHR in this field and fully support ODIHR's election observation methodology as international gold standard in this field. We commend ODIHR's impressive work on elections done in 2022 and remain committed to following-up on the recommendations emerging from the OSCE election observation missions, both inside and outside the EU.

10. Mr. Director,

The EU and its Member States reaffirm the decisive role of the activities of ODIHR in assisting participating States in implementing their OSCE commitments in the areas of human rights, fundamental freedoms and democracy. In your report, you highlighted many commendable examples of this cooperation from the last year. In order to be able to positively respond to future assistance requests, carry out its vital work and deliver on its mandate, we stress that ODIHR must be adequately staffed and resourced and we urge all participating States to ensure that the Office receives the necessary resources.

11. We once again thank you for the presentation and we wish you every success for the future.

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 country ICELAND, member of the European Economic Area, as well as ANDORRA, MONACO and SAN MARINO align themselves with this statement.

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