



EUROPEAN UNION

**OSCE Permanent Council No 1062
Vienna, 16 July 2015**

**EU Statement in response to the Head of the OSCE Office
in Yerevan, H.E. Ambassador Andrey Sorokin**

The European Union and its Member States warmly welcome Ambassador Sorokin to the Permanent Council and we thank him for his report.

We support the Office's activities in all three dimensions and are pleased to note that the Office continues to enjoy good cooperation with the Government and with civil society.

We note the ongoing work on improving the electoral process. We encourage the Government of Armenia to continue to work with the OSCE and ODIHR to address the issues raised in their election observation reports and to pursue an inclusive and transparent process of amendments to election-related legislation, in line with their recommendations.

However, democratic progress is not limited solely to improved elections. Working on continuously improving respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, as well as rule of law remains essential. We therefore continue to support the Office's work, in cooperation with OSCE/ODIHR, on reforming the judiciary and the criminal justice system. Our support for the Office's work in assisting the Armenian Government's police reform programme is well known. We have previously noted with concern the reports of excessive use of force on 23 June to disperse protestors in Yerevan, including the reports of journalists being targeted. We also recognise the largely restrained and well-handled policing since then during the ongoing series of protests over electricity prices, as well as the ongoing internal police investigation into reported police abuses. We hope this is perhaps evidence of the positive impact of the Office's work. We commend the actions of the OSCE Office in Yerevan in its swift reporting of the events in a Spot Report

and for its statement expressing concern and calling for restraint and dialogue. We encourage the government of Armenia to continue its work on security sector reform and note that the Office will need to remain fully engaged on this to help ensure its long-term sustainability.

We strongly support the Office's work on good governance and the fight against corruption. In particular we welcome the Office's continued assistance to the Rapid Regulatory Guillotine Project. We would welcome more information on how the office intends to support this area in the future.

We also reiterate our support for the Office's work on the human rights situation in the armed forces and welcome the results achieved.

We note the Ambassador's comments regarding secondments and resources. However, in a challenging resource climate, OSCE operations need to be leaner and sharper in fulfilling their mandate effectively. This may include the necessity to reprioritise and improve the focus of the programmatic structures and activities of Field Operations. We encourage the office to make full use of the OSCE Evaluation Framework for next year's PBPR, in order that a better measurement of impact can be made. We also encourage you to coordinate closely with other donors to ensure best value for money and that projects work to complement rather than duplicate the efforts of others.

In conclusion, we would like to thank Ambassador Sorokin and his team for their work and wish them all the best for their future endeavours.

The Candidate Countries the FORMER YUGOSLAV REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA*, MONTENEGRO*, ICELAND+ and ALBANIA*, the Country of the Stabilisation and Association Process and Potential Candidate BOSNIA and HERZEGOVINA, and the EFTA country NORWAY, member of the European Economic Area, as well as UKRAINE align themselves with this statement.

* The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro and Albania 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.