



EUROPEAN UNION

**OSCE Permanent Council Nr 981
Vienna, 23 January 2014**

**EU Statement in Response to the Chairpersons of the
Economic and Environmental Committee and the Human
Dimension Committee**

The European Union thanks the Chair of the Economic and Environmental Committee, H.E. Ambassador Ol'ga Algayerova, and the Chair of the Human Dimension Committee, H.E. Ambassador Robert Kvile, for their substantial presentations. We sincerely thank you for taking up this responsibility this year.

Regarding the Economic and Environmental Committee, we welcome the intention of the Chair to continue the practice of convening thematic Committee meetings and we appreciate the choice of the themes. We hope this will enable us to have focused discussions and interesting exchanges of views.

We encourage the Chair to continue the practice of inviting representatives of field missions, civil society representatives, including NGOs, academia and the private sector, and representatives of other specialised international institutions to our Committee meetings. We believe that this approach will help us to better connect our political discussions in Vienna with our concrete work in the field, as well as to better identify areas where the OSCE can add real value.

We welcome the continuation of our discussions on good governance and transparency. Making progress on both issues requires a long-term approach. We believe that the OSCE has developed wide-ranging expertise in this area which is relevant to other topics within the scope of the Economic and Environmental Dimension and should be mainstreamed in all Second Dimension activities. We look forward to the Committee meeting on mechanisms to assess money laundering risks and improve capacity to recover stolen assets in the OSCE area. We see it as preparation for this year's Economic and Environmental Dimension Implementation Meeting which should focus on good governance and

transparency, and provide an opportunity to also take stock of progress made by participating States on the implementation of the commitments we made in Dublin.

Environmental challenges are often cross boundary in nature and the OSCE, as a regional security organisation, is well placed to play an important role in facilitating and enhancing dialogue and cooperation and thus contributing to confidence building and conflict prevention. In this context, we welcome the inclusion, in the work plan of the Second Committee, of a thematic meeting on water management issues.

We commend the efforts of the Chair to ensure continuity in our deliberations, whilst including meetings on the implementation of the Kyiv MC decisions on energy-related matters. We believe that we should continue to discuss energy security issues and that the decision on protection of energy networks from natural and man-made disasters should be regarded as the starting point for us to continue to work towards broadening the scope of our future discussions on these non-nuclear issues. We also support the idea of focusing on gender issues in the context of this year's 10th anniversary of the OSCE Gender Action Plan.

The Human Dimension Committee provides an important forum for regular in-depth discussions on human rights issues across the OSCE region. We believe it complements the other events scheduled during the year and offers an opportunity to devote attention to topics which do not feature so highly on the agenda of other Human Dimension meetings. Regrettably the implementation of our OSCE commitments in the Human Dimension is increasingly being challenged or even stalling in our region. There are also clear steps back in several participating States. This reinforces the importance of ensuring that sufficient time is devoted throughout the year to discussing the key issues and challenges in this dimension. We believe the programme proposed by Ambassador Kvile offers scope to do this and we thank him for his efforts to develop a balanced and comprehensive programme for the Human Dimension Committee in 2014.

The European Union welcomes the steps taken in recent years to strengthen the work of the Committee, most notably through the introduction of a standing agenda and we fully support the decision of Ambassador Kvile to maintain this practice. This structured approach affords participating States the opportunity for

regular and increased interaction with OSCE Executive Structures including its Institutions, and representatives of other relevant organisations in charge of human rights, as well as additional time to consider further the recommendations emerging from other events in the Human Dimension during the year.

We wish to reiterate our support for the Chairmanship's over-arching priorities in the human dimension, which are ensuring better implementation of OSCE commitments in the Human Dimension and enhancing the involvement of civil society in the work of our organisation. In the Human Dimension, the European Union will continue to focus on fundamental freedoms and we trust that work on them will be carried forward in an appropriate way. We believe the Human Dimension Committee can make a significant contribution in all these respects.

The practice of voluntary reporting to the Committee offers participating States a useful tool in ensuring we are mutually accountable to one another in the implementation of our agreed human dimension commitments. We commend those participating States that have engaged with this initiative. We will continue to contribute with presentations and we encourage all participating States to participate actively.

Likewise, we believe there is scope for greater involvement by civil society in the meetings of the Human Dimension Committee. We reiterate our invitation for the Chair of the Committee and the Chairmanship to consider how this can be taken forward. We remain convinced that an intensified exchange with civil society representatives will help sustain the dynamic in the Human Dimension Committee.

Finally, we would like to reiterate our support for your work, and to assure you of our intention to co-operate fully with you in the year ahead. We wish you every success.

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 country LIECHTENSTEIN, member of the European Economic Area, as well as the Republic of MOLDOVA, ARMENIA, GEORGIA, ANDORRA and SAN MARINO 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.