

PC.DEL/1659/17
1 December 2017

ENGLISH
Original: FRENCH

STATEMENT BY THE EUROPEAN UNION AT THE 1166th MEETING OF THE OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL

30 November 2017

In response to the Personal Representatives of the Chairperson-in-Office for tolerance and non-discrimination

We thank the two Personal Representatives of the Chairperson-in-Office for their statements. The European Union is firmly committed to combating all forms of discrimination on whatever grounds. All of the manifestations of intolerance that we unfortunately observe every day in the OSCE area, be they racist, anti-Semitic, anti-Muslim, anti-Christian, homophobic or directed at Roma or migrants, are contrary to all human rights principles and represent sources of conflict.

Government authorities have a fundamental role to play in systematically condemning hate speech. Combating all forms and manifestations of racism and xenophobia demands effective legal responses as well, but also prevention and education measures that promote the values of tolerance, social inclusion and equality of all members of society. In the light of our history, we, the OSCE participating States, have the duty to ensure that the diversity that is a feature of our space remains a rich asset and not an instrument of conflict. The tools elaborated by the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR), particularly for training police officers and magistrates and the collection of data on hate crimes, are valuable and helpful instruments.

In that regard, we emphasize that to be effective the actions of the three Representatives should complement and be closely co-ordinated with those of the ODIHR. Likewise, the three Representatives should co-ordinate their activities among themselves, under the aegis of the Chairmanship. Long-term planning and conduct of their activities, including country visits and the drafting of follow-up reports, should be the fruit of joint efforts. It is important not to compartmentalize the work carried out within the framework of the OSCE, so as to maintain the effectiveness and decisiveness of our comprehensive approach to combating all forms of discrimination, while encouraging intercultural and interreligious dialogue in a spirit of openness and mutual understanding. We would also suggest greater transparency and clarity in the work of the three Representatives and encourage the incoming Chairmanship to take measures in this regard.

Within the OSCE, the commitments undertaken in Copenhagen in 1990 and in Madrid in 2007 clearly state the obligations of States to combat all forms of discrimination on whatever basis. They recall the compelling necessity to ensure that rights and fundamental freedoms apply comprehensively to all human beings, both before the law and in practice. In

that regard, we should like to state that we are somewhat concerned that the compartmentalization of activities to combat religious intolerance within the OSCE could be detrimental to the cohesiveness of our commitments in dealing with religious intolerance and the multiple forms of or motives for discrimination.

In a context of increased tension, recalling our shared principles and foundation in combating all forms of intolerance – affirming the equal dignity of all human beings and combating intolerance of persons because they are different – is the best defence against the spiral of hate. We believe that promotion of religious tolerance and respect for diversity are of major importance for creating a favourable environment in which all individuals can fully exercise their right to freedom of religion or belief. These principles and priorities are at the heart of the OSCE's commitments and should continue more than ever to guide us in our work within the Organization.

The candidate countries the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia¹, Montenegro¹, Serbia¹ and Albania¹, the country of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidate Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Free Trade Association country and member of the European Economic Area Liechtenstein, as well as Ukraine, the Republic of Moldova and Andorra, align themselves with this statement.

1 The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Albania continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.