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**STATEMENT BY THE EUROPEAN UNION AT THE
1168th MEETING OF THE OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

14 December 2017

**In response to the OSCE Special Representative and
Co-ordinator for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings,
Ambassador Madina Jarbussynova**

The European Union and its Member States are pleased to welcome Ambassador Madina Jarbussynova, OSCE Special Representative and Co-ordinator for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings, to present her annual activity report.

Trafficking in human beings, which is often connected with organized crime, is one of the worst abuses of human rights, reducing human beings to commodities and profoundly and permanently affecting the dignity, integrity and rights of victims and deliberately exploiting vulnerable situations.

Last week, the Ministerial Council adopted two decisions on preventing trafficking in human beings and strengthening efforts to combat all forms of child trafficking, including for sexual exploitation, as well as other forms of sexual exploitation of children. The European Union welcomes this outcome, which underpins certain aspects of the EU's strategy in this area.

The European Union would like to recall its particular support for the two simulation-based training courses to combat human trafficking along migration routes held in Vicenza this year. We particularly stress the underlying cross-cutting approach highlighting the importance of identifying victims and prosecuting networks that take advantage of them, which will be integrated into the simulation model that you have announced for 2018.

Like other conferences this year, the conference on trafficking in children organized this year by the Alliance against Trafficking in Persons once again confirmed that the OSCE offers a platform for fruitful discussion by representatives of institutions, the private sector and civil society.

We look forward to your report on improving the identification and protection of potential victims of trafficking in human beings among migrants and refugees at first reception facilities. Based on the experience of field missions and your visits in the field to Greece, Italy and Turkey, it should provide a solid foundation for work by the States.

Madam Special Representative and Co-ordinator,

We should like to thank you for your commitment and that of your staff in helping participating States with the implementation of the OSCE Action Plan and Addendums. We appreciate your work on supply chains and especially welcome your country visits, which are valuable for maintaining dialogue with the highest authorities and with the actors in the field. We support the continuation of these visits and trust that the subsequent reports will be distributed in a timely fashion so as to ensure their relevance, including in the case of follow-up visits.

We take a positive view of your work in 2017. We appreciate the planned actions by your Office in 2018, which coincide with European objectives: an approach based on human rights, protection of victims and their rights, and combating criminal networks that take advantage of them. In that context, we support your proposals to study the influence of information and communication technologies on the development of certain types of trafficking and the importance of associated financial investigations to combat the networks.

Finally, we welcome your positive efforts to strengthen co-ordination with all executive structures (Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, field missions, Transnational Threats Department, Conflict Prevention Centre, etc.) and collaboration with other international organizations (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, Council of Europe, Inter-Agency Coordination Group).

We look forward to hearing your additional comments and recommendations on all of these issues.

Madam Special Representative and Co-ordinator,

We thank you sincerely for your excellent work to enable the OSCE to remain a credible partner in combating trafficking and strengthening the stability and security of our region in this way.

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, Georgia, Andorra, Monaco and San Marino, 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.