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OSCE Permanent Council No. 1285 Vienna, 15 October 2020

EU Statement in Response to the Report by the OSCE Special Representative and Co-ordinator for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings, Mr. Valiant Richey

The European Union welcomes the OSCE Special Representative and Co-ordinator for Combating trafficking in human beings, Mr. Valiant Richey, to the Permanent Council. We thank you for your report.

Combating trafficking in human beings remains a key priority of the European Union. As you rightly outlined today, it is both a security issue and a human rights issue. The EU and its Member States are committed to working closely with international partners to promote adherence to international legal standards on trafficking in persons, in line with UNTOC and the Palermo Protocols.

The EU has in place a solid legal and policy framework to address trafficking in human beings, anchored in the EU Anti-trafficking Directive, and ensuring a coherent response to address trafficking in human beings within and outside the EU. The EU addresses trafficking in human beings comprehensively through coordination in all relevant areas and as a joint effort with stakeholders. The new EU Security Union Strategy 2020 - 2025 provides for stepping up partnerships between the EU and non-EU countries up to counter trafficking as common threats.

In June, the EU Commission also adopted a Victims Rights Strategy. Strengthening the mechanisms aimed at offering effective protection to the victims, providing



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specific assistance to the most vulnerable categories of victims, and facilitating the victims' access to justice remain primary concerns.

We continue to support the “policy to practice” methodology implemented by your Office in assisting Participating States and Partners for Co-operation in the implementation of their OSCE anti-trafficking commitments. In this respect, the EU would like to express its appreciation for the comprehensive and ambitious strategy on prosecution launched this year, which combines policy recommendation and training programmes. We share many of the findings highlighted during the Alliance this year, including on the need for specialized prosecutors and policy units and on the importance of multi-agency cooperation and joint investigation teams. We also continue to support your work on financial investigation and your practical approach to it.

Moreover, we welcome your cooperation with Tech Against Trafficking and your joint study on how technology is used to prevent and combat trafficking in human beings. Exploring emerging trends in the field of trafficking in human beings should remain one of the priorities of your Office. Information and communication technology have rapidly changed the criminal landscape with traffickers adopting new *modi operandi* to recruit, control and exploit victims. To address these challenges, establishing broad cooperation framework fit for the digital era is crucial.

We also would like to insist on the importance of addressing the gender dimension of human trafficking. The new EU Gender Equality Strategy reiterates that the concerns of women and girls affected by trafficking have to be at the center of policy developments. A gender-sensitive approach is crucial to help better protect the victims, but also to increase the efficiency of the criminal justice response. Therefore,



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we very much look forward to the outcome of your research and further initiatives in this field.

Finally, we commend your work to follow-up on the implementation of the 2018 MC Decision on strengthening efforts to prevent and combat child trafficking, including of unaccompanied minors.

The EU has always been a staunch supporter of partnerships to ensure effective cooperation and coordination of efforts in the fight against trafficking in human beings. Therefore, we welcome the work you carried out so far with respect to cooperation with UN bodies and with the Council of Europe on the one hand, and with the OSCE Institutions and Field Missions, on the other hand. Once again, we strongly commend the leadership role played by your Office as co-chair of the UN's Inter-Agency Coordination Group Against Trafficking (ICAT), which contributes to bridging the gap between global policy and regional anti-trafficking responses. We encourage you to focus on further strengthening coordination and partnerships, including with the UNODC, in order to promote full implementation of the Palermo Convention and its two additional Protocols.

Mr. Special Representative and Coordinator, we also thank you for your "Recommendations on short-term responses to COVID-19". As you rightly outlined, the Covid-19 pandemic has and will have consequences in the field of trafficking in human beings, as vulnerabilities are being compounded, new trafficking trends emerge and shelter may be harder to access. It is necessary to strengthen our responses to trafficking in human beings accordingly.

To conclude, we take a very positive view of your work in 2020 and thank you for your efforts. It is essential to continue to adopt a comprehensive approach when



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addressing trafficking in human beings, which is human rights-based, victim-centered, gender-sensitive and age-specific. We look forward to continuing the cooperation with you and your team and wish you every success.

The Candidate Countries REPUBLIC of NORTH MACEDONIA*, MONTENEGRO*, SERBIA* and ALBANIA*, the Country of the Stabilisation and Association Process and Potential Candidate BOSNIA and HERZEGOVINA, and the EFTA countries ICELAND and LIECHTENSTEIN, members of the European Economic Area, as well as UKRAINE, the REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA, GEORGIA, ANDORRA and SAN MARINO align themselves with this statement.

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