

**EUROPEAN UNION****OSCE Special Permanent Council Nr 958
Vienna, 2 July 2013**

EU statement in reply to the statements by the Head of the Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs, H.E. Didier Burkhalter, and the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Serbia, H.E. Ivan Mrkic

The European Union warmly welcomes the Head of the Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs, H.E. Didier Burkhalter, and the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Serbia, H.E. Ivan Mrkic, to the Permanent Council and thanks them for their comprehensive presentations.

We have listened with great attention and interest to the outline of the Joint Work Plan elaborated by Switzerland and Serbia in the run-up to their OSCE Chairmanships in 2014 and 2015 respectively. As we said in our closing statement at the Dublin Ministerial Council, the EU wants to see the OSCE remain a robust pillar in Europe's security architecture. We welcome therefore the determination on the part of future Chairmanships to base their activities on the comprehensive concept of security with a view to building on progress in realising the vision of common and indivisible Euro-Atlantic and Eurasian security community, rooted in agreed principles, shared commitments and common goals, in particular the promotion of, and respect for, human rights and fundamental freedoms, democracy and the rule of law.

The EU's action in the OSCE will continue to be guided by the following main priorities:

- Strengthening OSCE capacities across the conflict cycle, as well as achieving tangible progress in the resolution of protracted conflicts and preventing new conflicts;
 - Updating, strengthening and modernising conventional arms control and confidence and security building measures;
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- Strengthening implementation of all our commitments in the three dimensions, notably in the human dimension;
- Improving the OSCE's effectiveness in tackling transnational and emerging threats and challenges.

We are particularly pleased to note that the two forthcoming Chairmanships share the approaches and many of the priorities of the EU. This pertains, *inter alia*, to the resolution of the protracted conflicts in the OSCE area; to the full support for the autonomous OSCE institutions as well as field missions in assisting the participating States to implement their commitments; to the strengthened engagement with civil society; and to the continued promotion of gender perspectives in the OSCE's work. We also welcome the importance attached to enhancing close cooperation between the OSCE and other relevant international and regional organisations. We pledge our full engagement and cooperation with both Chairmanships in line with the objectives and priorities of the EU.

With regards to combating transnational threats, the initiative to develop further the OSCE's contributions to cyber security deserves our strong support. The EU would like to see a continued focus on good governance in the Economic and Environmental Dimension and could also support the theme proposed for next year's Economic and Environmental Forum.

In the human dimension the EU will continue to focus on fundamental freedoms and we are reassured that work on them will be carried forward. The EU is concerned that, in certain parts of the OSCE area, attacks on human rights and democratic principles persist or are even growing worse, contravening the international obligations and commitments undertaken by the States concerned. We actively support measures to promote full implementation of existing commitments and to strengthen these commitments where necessary, particularly in the area of freedom of expression and freedom of the media both offline and online, and the safety of journalists.

We are pleased to note that the future OSCE Chairmanships will explore further ways to strengthen a mutually beneficial co-operation between the OSCE and its Mediterranean and Asian partners, including Afghanistan.

We welcome the priority given to enhancing the effectiveness of the organisation's structures and internal procedures.

We find remarkable the extent of the cooperation between Switzerland and Serbia which extends well beyond the elaboration of the Joint Work Plan to include a division of labour between the two, as set out in their joint agreement endorsed in the 2011 Ministerial Council decision granting their successive Chairmanships. We join Switzerland and Serbia in encouraging other potential Chairmanships to follow their example in putting forward joint candidacies which could help to address the overreliance on short term planning which is a feature of the OSCE.

The need for a medium- to long-term perspective is a challenge that the Helsinki + 40 process is designed to address and we are glad to see it in the Joint Workplan. Responsibility for steering Helsinki + 40 is a joint endeavour of all three Chairmanships, Ukraine, Switzerland and Serbia, which will have particular responsibility for bringing this process to a successful conclusion. Rest assured, you will have the full support of the EU in this regard. In this context, we welcome the commitment in the Joint Work Plan to strengthen cooperation with academic networks and civil society and we would support a continuation of the existing Track II approach, to enable their inputs to feed into our efforts to shape the future of the OSCE.

We commend the increasing and very high level of engagement between Belgrade and Pristina and welcome the progress made in the EU-facilitated dialogue and encourage further efforts to this end. This was recognised by the European Council at its meeting last week which agreed to open accession negotiations with Serbia by next January at the latest as well as commencing talks on a Stabilisation and Association Agreement for Kosovo.

In conclusion, the EU looks forward to close and productive co-operation with Switzerland and Serbia in the years ahead.

The Candidate Countries the former Yugoslav Republic of MACEDONIA*, MONTENEGRO*, ICELAND+, the Country of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidate BOSNIA and HERZEGOVINA, and the EFTA country LIECHTENSTEIN, member of the European Economic Area, as well as the Republic of MOLDOVA, ANDORRA and SAN MARINO, align themselves with this statement.

* The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Montenegro 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.
