

STATEMENT BY THE EUROPEAN UNION AT THE 1198th MEETING OF THE OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL

18 October 2018

In response to the three personal representatives of the Chairperson-in-Office on combating tolerance and non-discrimination

We thank the personal representative of the Chairperson-in-Office for participating in this meeting and for the report he has distributed, and regret that the other personal representatives are not present here in Vienna.

The European Union is firmly committed to combating all forms of discrimination, regardless of the motives or the victims. All the manifestations of intolerance that we unfortunately observe every day in the OSCE area, whether they are racist, anti-Semitic, religious, homophobic or still perpetrated against Roma, migrants, non-believers or apostates, are contrary to all human rights values and represent sources of conflict.

Public authorities have a leading role to play in systematically condemning hate speech. Combating all forms and manifestations of racism and xenophobia also requires both effective legal responses and preventative and educational measures that promote the values of tolerance, social inclusion and equality before the law of all members of society. Given our history, we, OSCE participating States, have a duty to ensure that the diversity inherent in our territories remains an asset, not an instrument of social fragmentation and conflict. The tools developed by the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR), particularly in terms of the training of police officers and magistrates and the collection of data on hate crimes, are valuable levers to help us.

In this regard, we stress once again that in order to be effective, the actions of the representatives must be complementary and carried out in close co-operation with those of the ODIHR, under the aegis of the Chairmanship. We recall that reports must be circulated well in advance in order to be usefully discussed at the Permanent Council. Likewise, we hope that the representatives will co-ordinate as closely as possible with each other in order to promote a universal approach: the planning of their activities in the long term, country visits and the preparation of subsequent reports must be the result of joint efforts. In order to preserve the effectiveness of and the strength of our global approach to the fight against all forms of discrimination, it is important not to reinforce the compartmentalization of our actions, while promoting intercultural and interreligious dialogue in a spirit of openness and mutual understanding. We can see an interest in more transparency and clarity in the activities of the three representatives and in improving their working methods and overall functioning. We encourage the future Slovak Chairmanship to take steps in this direction.

At the OSCE level, the Copenhagen (1990) and Madrid (2007) commitments clearly set out States' obligations to combat all forms of discrimination, whatever the basis. They recall the pressing need to ensure that fundamental rights and freedoms apply to all human beings universally, in law and in practice. In this regard, we wish to express our concern that the compartmentalization of the fight against religious intolerance at the OSCE level is detrimental to the coherence of our commitments when we address religious intolerance and the multiple forms of or grounds for discrimination.

In a context of increased tension, the reminder of our common values and the common basis for combating all forms of intolerance, namely the affirmation of the equal dignity of each person and the fight against intolerance towards another person because they are different, is the best defence against the spiral of hatred. These values are at the heart of the OSCE's commitments and must continue to guide us more than ever 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 European Free Trade Association countries and members of the European Economic Area Iceland and Liechtenstein, as well as Ukraine, the Republic of Moldova, Georgia, Andorra 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.