



## EUROPEAN UNION

### **OSCE Permanent Council No. 1379 Vienna, 23 June 2022**

#### **EU Statement in response to the report by the OSCE Project Coordinator in Ukraine, Ambassador Henrik Villadsen**

1. The European Union warmly welcomes Ambassador Henrik Villadsen to the Permanent Council and thanks him for his report. Ambassador Villadsen, since the establishment of the Project Coordinator in Ukraine in 1999, your office has undertaken vital work in a wide range of areas, including tailor-made programmes and projects on rule of law, democratization, good governance, border management and security, combatting domestic violence, gender equality and gender mainstreaming. In addition, we are grateful for your work in areas such as demining, combating trafficking in human beings and facilitating psychological support to the conflict-affected population, following Russia's ongoing military aggression against Ukraine.
2. The EU unequivocally supports the Project Coordinator in Ukraine. The Coordinator's work over the last 23 years has brought significant results in assisting Ukraine in its comprehensive reform agenda, which in turn benefitted the Ukrainian population. We also believe that the PCU could continue to play an equally important role in the current circumstances and in a post-conflict setting in order to support reconstruction of the war-torn Ukraine and to assist the Ukrainian people to continue building a democratic and resilient country, embracing with confidence its European future.
3. The EU strongly supports the extension of the PCU's mandate. Therefore, we deeply regret the Russian Federation's announcement that they intend to block an agreement on the continuation of the PCU's mandate. We continue to urge Russia to reconsider its position in order to allow the PCU to continue its important work in Ukraine.

4. Unfortunately, this announcement came as no surprise as it is part of a regrettable pattern. Since 2014, when Russia started its aggression against Ukraine by illegally annexing the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol and launching its destabilising actions in eastern Ukraine, they have blocked the work of the PCU and the SMM in the Crimean peninsula despite the fact that their mandates cover the whole territory of Ukraine within its internationally recognised borders.
5. In addition, since 24 February this year, Russia has pursued its full-scale and brutal war of aggression upon the peaceful and democratic State of Ukraine, bringing unspeakable suffering to the Ukrainian population. We condemn Russia's war in the strongest possible terms and call on Russia to immediately and unconditionally cease its military actions and withdraw all its troops and equipment from the entire territory of Ukraine, including the illegally annexed Crimean peninsula. We also reiterate our call on Belarus to stop enabling the Russian aggression and to abide by its international obligations.
6. Russia seems determined to dismantle every tool of the OSCE toolbox one by one, steadfastly committed to hampering or abolishing all instruments that would take us closer to transparency, mediation, reconciliation, and, eventually, a sustainable peace. This was the case for all OSCE field operations in Ukraine. First, Russia ensured that the Border Observer Mission at Gukovo and Donetsk was forced to close in September 2021. Then, they forced the closure of the Special Monitoring Mission in Ukraine in April 2022. On top of this, we see Russia-backed armed formations keeping SMM Mission members in detention in the Donetsk and Luhansk regions of Ukraine, despite their functional protection as OSCE staff. This is completely unacceptable; we condemn it in the strongest terms and call for their immediate release. Now, the Project Coordinator's Office in Ukraine is the next target of Russia's obstruction.
7. The EU considers it of vital importance that the OSCE continues its assistance in Ukraine's reform processes together with the Ukrainian government and other interlocutors. We support all efforts of the OSCE Chairmanship-in-Office, the OSCE

executive structures and autonomous institutions in finding ways to ensure a continued strong OSCE presence in Ukraine. We also welcome that the host nation, Ukraine, intends to preserve these achievements in the years to come.

8. Finally, we would like to thank Ambassador Villadsen and his able team for all their work, especially during the last challenging months. You have a proven great ability to adjust to adverse circumstances and to use your mandate in a flexible manner in order to support Ukraine in the best possible way. The discontinuation of your Office's activities would be a great loss for Ukraine and for the OSCE as a whole.

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

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