



EUROPEAN UNION

**OSCE Permanent Council No 1107
Vienna, 7 July 2016**

EU Statement in response to Mr Ivan Šimonović, United Nations Assistant Secretary-General for Human Rights

The EU is pleased to welcome Mr Ivan Šimonović, United Nations Assistant Secretary-General for Human Rights to the Permanent Council, and we thank him for his briefing.

Full respect for human rights is crucial for the attainment of sustainable peace and security – an objective which underpins the work of the United Nations and the OSCE and at the root of the OSCE comprehensive concept of security. The EU is therefore extremely concerned that we continue to witness growing threats to the enjoyment of fundamental freedoms and human rights in some parts of the OSCE region, shrinking the space for civil society.

As documented by the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, ODIHR, and the HCNM and others, the humanitarian consequences of the crisis in and around Ukraine are dire, and the human rights challenges particularly acute: more than 30,000 casualties, millions forced to flee their homes, the breakdown of the rule of law in separatist-held areas and human rights violations and abuses on both sides of the line of contact in the Donbas, in particular in separatist-held territories. We call on both sides to safeguard the human rights of all and deplore that international organisations continue to be denied safe and unfettered humanitarian access to separatist-held areas. We welcome the readiness expressed by the Ukrainian government to address those issues directed at them.

We also remain deeply concerned by the significant deterioration of the human rights situation in Crimea since the peninsula's illegal annexation by Russia. Over the past two years, Crimean voices who have dared oppose Russia's illegal actions have faced harassment, arrest and torture. Crimean Tatars have been in particular subject to persecution. We condemn it and call on those responsible for the situation on the

ground to protect the human rights of all in Crimea and reiterate our call for full, immediate and unfettered access for international human rights actors, including OSCE institutions, to the peninsula. We remain firm in our non-recognition of the illegal annexation of Crimea and Sevastopol by Russia.

In the context of this crisis, and faced also with challenges in other parts of the OSCE region, the OSCE's human dimension remains as important and relevant as ever. Part of the contribution the OSCE can make is through implementing and advancing in its region the human rights standards that have been developed at the UN. There can be no question over whether UN standards apply in the OSCE region and are pertinent to the OSCE's work. Indeed it would be illogical to somehow suggest that the specific context of the OSCE puts into question the international obligations on states to uphold universal values. As we face continued challenges to human rights, the OSCE, as a regional organisation, has a key role to play in championing treaty obligations and international standards. We therefore continue to support advancing in the OSCE the important work and resolutions of the UN on issues of clear OSCE competence, such as on women, peace and security, freedom of expression online and offline, and in many other areas.

It is also vitally important that OSCE participating States cooperate fully with the UN's human rights bodies and special procedures. We welcome the cooperation that already exists between the UN and the OSCE, and encourage both organisations to examine how strengthening this cooperation, both between institutions and on the ground, including through the OSCE field missions, can bring added value.

We wish to conclude by underlining our full support for the work and independence of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights and our commitment to working with and through the UN and OSCE to upholding human rights and fundamental freedoms.

The Candidate Countries the FORMER YUGOSLAV REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA*, MONTENEGRO* 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.

* The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro and Albania continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.