



## **EUROPEAN UNION**

### **OSCE Reinforced Permanent Council 889 Vienna, 18 November 2011**

#### **EU statement**

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Mr Chairperson,

Almost one year ago, the heads of State or Government of the 56 participating States of the OSCE recommitted themselves to the vision of a free, democratic, common and indivisible Euro-Atlantic and Eurasian security community stretching from Vancouver to Vladivostok. Full implementation of all OSCE norms, principles and commitments in all dimensions and the exclusion of the threat or use of force shall be the trademark of such a community. The Astana Declaration gave this headline attention. Since then, important evolutions in the OSCE context took place. Some alarming events and trends have been observed in some participating States. Only weeks after the adoption of the Astana Declaration we witnessed serious violations of its commitments in Belarus. In 2011 we also saw some positive and historic developments in the southern Mediterranean.

The European Union sees the Vilnius Ministerial Council as a continuation of the endeavour, inspired by the Corfu Process and launched at the Astana Summit, to build a free, democratic, common and indivisible security community. The various draft decisions and declarations tabled by the Chairmanship-in-Office clearly aim to serve this vision, and we pledge our full support.

The EU wishes to stress once again the fundamental importance of the OSCE comprehensive concept of security. This must be reflected in the package of decisions that our Ministers will approve. Therefore, the EU wishes to achieve progress in all dimensions of the OSCE work at the Vilnius Ministerial Council. The work of the EU towards the Vilnius Council has been guided by focusing on four priorities.

Mr Chairperson,

Firstly, adopting a decision in Vilnius on enhancing OSCE capacities with regard to conflict cycle should be among major deliverables of the Ministerial Council. The draft of the Chairmanship provides a useful basis for discussion but should be strengthened to reflect the fact that this issue lies at the core of the OSCE. The text to be adopted in Vilnius should be ambitious, operational and task-oriented, covering the entire spectrum of issues in an integrated manner. The cross-dimensional character, as well as the existing flexibility of OSCE structures to act should be preserved. From our point of view, of particular importance is to strengthen OSCE capacities with regard to early warning and early action.

At the same time, we are concerned that unresolved conflicts continue to present a serious threat to our common security. Therefore, it is important that in Vilnius we recognise the need to intensify our efforts to settle existing conflicts in a peaceful and negotiated manner within agreed formats and with full respect for the OSCE norms, principles and commitments, as well as the principles of international law.

Secondly, in the context of the OSCE's comprehensive concept of security, the EU wishes to stress again the fundamental importance of the promotion and respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, democracy and the rule of

law. Over the past years, we have seen serious and growing threats to freedom of expression. The Chairmanship's draft decisions rightly concentrate on two aspects: freedom of expression and pluralism in the digital media and safety of journalists. These decisions should feature among major deliverables of the Ministerial Council. As safety of journalists is deteriorating in some parts of the OSCE area, by adopting those decisions, participating States would confirm their engagement to tackle this disturbing trend and re-affirm their commitments in the area of freedom of expression.

Thirdly, the European Union considers that the package of five draft ministerial decisions under discussion in the field of transnational threats to security provides an adequate response to the changing and complex security environment and builds upon the previous work in these areas. We are of the opinion that the adoption of a TNT package will strengthen the effectiveness of the OSCE executive structures while highlighting its core values and comparative advantages.

Fourthly, we underline issues relevant to the Forum for Security Cooperation, such as the 2011 Vienna Document, and the need to step up further work in this regard. Decisions on small arms and light weapons and stockpiles of conventional ammunition, would also be an important step to strengthen our common security space.

We see the draft decisions of the Chairmanship in the economic and environmental dimension as contributing usefully to the strategic goal of preventing conflicts and building trust and confidence, including in the field of energy, where we also wish to build up on previous decisions and strengthen our dialogue on energy security issues.

The European Union wishes to underline the importance of enhancing our co-operation with the Asian and Mediterranean Partners. The Vilnius Ministerial Council should particularly take into account the ongoing transformations in the

southern Mediterranean. We believe that the OSCE's experience of supporting its participating States in meeting the challenges of the transition to democracy can be of interest and potential benefit to the Partners, particularly those currently undergoing transition. We also underscore the need to develop a strategy to contribute to collective international efforts to promote a stable, independent, prosperous and democratic Afghanistan and commend the Chairmanship for the draft decision in that respect.

Mr Chairperson,

We recall the agreement of our Heads of State or Government that progress achieved in the implementation of the Astana Declaration will be reviewed at the Vilnius Ministerial Council. The outcome of this review will have to be reflected in the final document of the Vilnius Ministerial and we are ready to engage fully on this.

The EU hopes that the Ministers will be able to register in Vilnius progress on the negotiation process for the settlement of the Transnistrian conflict, with the resumption of the official 5+2 talks scheduled in Vilnius on 30 November, as well as on the work done by the Minsk Group Co-Chairs and the Geneva Discussions.

Mr Chairperson,

In concluding, the European Union would like to express its strong appreciation for your efforts to the benefit of all the participating States and we assure you of our resolve to work towards achieving a successful Ministerial Council in Vilnius.

The candidate countries CROATIA\*, the FORMER YUGOSLAV REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA\*, MONTENEGRO\* and ICELAND\*\*, the countries of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidate countries ALBANIA, BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA and SERBIA, the European Free Trade Association country LIECHTENSTEIN, member of the European Economic Area, as well as the REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA, ANDORRA and SAN MARINO align themselves with this statement.

\*Croatia, 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 the European Economic Area.