



## EUROPEAN UNION

### **OSCE Permanent Council No. 1239 Vienna, 5 September 2019**

#### **EU Statement in response to the Report by the Head of the OSCE Mission in Kosovo, Ambassador Jan Braathu**

The European Union and its Member States warmly welcome H. E. Ambassador Jan Braathu back to the Permanent Council.

Let us use this opportunity to once again reiterate our unwavering support for the important work carried out by the OSCE Mission in Kosovo, in contributing to a safe and secure, as well as democratic, prosperous and multi-ethnic Kosovo<sup>\*</sup>, based on respect for human rights, fundamental freedoms and the rule of law, including rights of persons belonging to minorities.

The notion that, in the last 20 years, the Mission has become a trusted partner, working towards the shared goal of developing a democratic and multi-ethnic society based on European principles and values, was highlighted also in June during the visit to the Mission of the OSCE Chairperson-in-Office Miroslav Lajčák, which we wholeheartedly welcome.

We furthermore welcome that, during the reporting period, the Mission also received the Representative on Freedom of the Media Mr. Désir, as well as the High Commissioner on National Minorities Mr. Zannier. The OSCE officials discussed media freedom, safety of journalists, rights of persons belonging to minorities, education, employment and possibilities for further OSCE support, which are all topics of the utmost importance to the European Union as well.

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<sup>\*</sup> This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSCR 1244/1999 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence.

The European Union welcomes the Mission's engagement on a wide range of valuable activities, thus further intensifying its "whole-of-Mission" approach, including the promotion of human rights, rule of law, democratization through the support for democratic institutions and civic participation in the decision-making process, as well as an efficient and democratic security and public safety sector.

We particularly appreciate that the Mission continues to promote inter-community cooperation towards enhancing community relations. We commend the Mission's commitment to the protection of human rights, especially the follow-up activities in response to concrete concerns. We also welcome the monitoring of, and support for, Kosovo institutions' performance in improving inter-community relations and in responding to and addressing security incidents affecting persons belonging to minorities, including the vulnerable groups. We welcome the valuable technical assistance provided by the Mission during elections, including during the upcoming elections on 6 October.

We also welcome the continued Mission's work in assisting stakeholders in Kosovo to exercise their duties effectively, offering support and expertise to enhance compliance with good governance and highest international human rights standards. To improve accountability and transparency of institutions remains especially important in that regard.

In addition, strengthening coordination with stakeholders relating to the protection of rights of persons belonging to minorities, including their safety, protection of their property and language rights, along with the protection of their cultural and religious heritage, including the Special Protective Zones, should remain high on the Mission's long – term agenda.

We welcome the fact that the Mission continues to focus on several other important areas, such as: prevention and countering of violent extremism and radicalization leading to terrorism, the freedom of the media and the safety of journalists, tackling domestic violence and trafficking of human beings, return of displaced persons, gender mainstreaming, as well as inter-faith dialogue. We also commend the

numerous activities involving youth and look forward to increased cooperation with the Regional Youth Cooperation Office (RYCO).

Continuing to play a leading role in the political and security consolidation in the region, and having the highest stakes in that outcome, the European Union remains determined to continue to assist Kosovo on its path towards lasting stability. We will maintain our firm support for the socio - economic development of Kosovo for the benefit of all, including through financial and technical assistance.

We underline that progress in the EU-facilitated dialogue between Belgrade and Pristina remains an essential requirement for both in order to advance on their respective European paths, in line with the European perspective of the region. Therefore, we urge both sides to redouble their efforts to engage constructively in this process.

In conclusion, we would like to thank once again Ambassador Braathu, and assure him and his capable team of the European Union's continued support.

The Candidate Countries REPUBLIC of NORTH MACEDONIA\*, MONTENEGRO\* and ALBANIA\*, 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 SAN MARINO align themselves with this statement.

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