



EUROPEAN UNION

2020 Albanian OSCE Chairmanship Conference

“Good Governance and the Fight against Corruption in the Digital Era: Strengthening the Principles of Transparency, Integrity and Accountability”

6 - 7 July 2020

EU Opening Statement

The European Union and its Member States are pleased to participate in the 2020 Albanian OSCE Chairmanship Conference on Good Governance and the Fight against Corruption in the Digital Era: Strengthening the Principles of Transparency, Integrity and Accountability.

We would like to thank the Albanian Chairmanship for organising this conference and for the flexibility of the format, in the current circumstances, that allows for wide participation. We also thank the distinguished speakers of the opening panel for their introductory remarks.

We welcome that this conference gives us the opportunity to further build upon this year's Economic and Environmental Forum discussions on the topic of corruption.

Corruption represents a threat to security, as well as to democracy, but the true social cost of corruption cannot be measured merely by the amount of bribes paid or public funds diverted. The cost of corruption also entails a loss of public trust, growing inequalities and further degradation of the environment. Lack of good environmental governance and corruption are enablers of environmental crime, as well as trafficking of natural resources and wildlife. It includes the loss of output due to the misallocation of resources, distortion of incentives and other inefficiencies.

The COVID-19 pandemic has further exacerbated the risk of corruption and the measures taken by governments, leading in many cases to widespread, temporary unemployment, are greatly affecting the most vulnerable in our societies. The recent increase in criminal activities in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic is a reminder that we should not allow COVID-19 to hinder our anti-corruption efforts or to compromise our values and our standards, including transparency, integrity and accountability.

On the other hand, the COVID-19 pandemic has illustrated the potential that digital technologies can play in our lives and our work, as well as in the fight against corruption.

Corruption does not occur in isolation and is multidimensional in its character. It is therefore critical to tackle corruption in a comprehensive way, without political interference. We are convinced that the efforts to prevent and combat this global phenomenon must be stepped up. The work undertaken and high standards set by the United Nations Office of drugs and Crime (UNODC) and the United Nations Convention against Corruption (UNCAC) is of great importance for this international and multidimensional issue.

The EU reaffirms its strong commitment to continue efforts to prevent, combat and to promote effective measures against corruption in all forms. We also strongly support the valuable work of the OSCE's autonomous institutions and field missions, as well as the Secretariat. In this regard, we would like to mention the close cooperation of the EU, the Council of Europe, the OECD and the OSCE on the anti-trafficking efforts and initiatives. Furthermore, we would like to highlight the continuous support of many EU Member States to the anti-corruption OSCE projects through extensive additional financial contributions as well as through their expertise.

We are looking forward to fruitful discussions in the coming two days and we hope that they will move us further towards finding a common language on the topic of corruption.

The Candidate Countries REPUBLIC of NORTH MACEDONIA*, MONTENEGRO*, SERBIA* 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 UKRAINE, ARMENIA, GEORGIA, ANDORRA and SAN MARINO align themselves with this statement.

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