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STATEMENT BY THE EUROPEAN UNION AT THE 1249th MEETING OF THE OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL

28 November 2019

In response to the three Personal Representatives of the Chairperson-in-Office on tolerance and non-discrimination

We thank the Personal Representatives of the Chairperson-in-Office for their participation and regret that one of them is not present in Vienna.

Combating discrimination and all forms of intolerance, regardless of the motives and the victims, is one of the European Union's priorities as part of both its internal policy and its foreign policy and international co-operation, including in the OSCE. This strong commitment was once again confirmed in March through the adoption of the EU Human Rights Guidelines on Non-discrimination in External Action.

All the manifestations of intolerance that we unfortunately observe every day in the OSCE area, whether they are racist, anti-Semitic, based on religion or conviction, sexual orientation or gender identity, or perpetrated against Roma, migrants, non-believers or apostates, are contrary to all human rights values and represent sources of conflict.

Public authorities have a leading role to play in systematically condemning hate speech. Combating all forms and manifestations of racism and xenophobia also requires both effective legal responses and preventive and educational measures that promote the values of tolerance, social inclusion and equality before the law of all members of society. Given our history, we, the OSCE participating States, have a duty to ensure that the diversity inherent in our territories remains an asset, not an instrument of social fragmentation and conflict. The tools developed by the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR), particularly in terms of the training of police officers and magistrates and the collection of data on hate crimes, are valuable levers to help us.

In that regard, we stress once again that in order to be effective, the actions of the representatives must be complementary and carried out in close co-operation with those of the ODIHR, under the aegis of the Chairmanship. We recall that reports must be circulated well in advance in order to be usefully discussed in the Permanent Council. Likewise, we would like to see the representatives co-ordinating as closely as possible with each other in order to promote a universal approach: the planning of their activities in the long term, country visits and the preparation of subsequent reports must be the result of joint efforts. In order to preserve the effectiveness and strength of our comprehensive approach to the fight against all forms of discrimination, it is important not to further fragment our activities, and also to promote intercultural and interreligious dialogue in a spirit of openness and mutual understanding. There is a need for more transparency and clarity in the activities of the three representatives and an improvement in their working

methods and overall functioning. We encourage the future Albanian Chairmanship to take steps in that direction.

At the OSCE level, the Copenhagen (1990) and Madrid (2007) commitments clearly set out States' obligations to combat all forms of discrimination, whatever the basis. They recall the pressing need to ensure that fundamental rights and freedoms apply universally to all human beings, in law and in practice. In that regard, we wish to express our concern that the fragmentation of the fight against religious intolerance at the OSCE level will be detrimental to the coherence of our commitments when dealing with religious intolerance and the multiple forms of or grounds for discrimination.

In a context of increased tension, the reminder of our common values and the common basis for combating all forms of intolerance, namely the affirmation of the equal dignity of each person and the fight against intolerance towards others because they are different, is the best defence against the spiral of hatred. These values are at the heart of the OSCE's commitments and must continue more than ever to guide us in our work.

The candidate countries North Macedonia¹, Montenegro¹, Serbia¹ and Albania¹, the country of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidate Bosnia and Herzegovina, the European Free Trade Association country and member of the European Economic Area Iceland, as well as Ukraine, the Republic of Moldova, Armenia, Georgia, Andorra and San Marino, align themselves with this statement.

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