



## EUROPEAN UNION

### **OSCE Permanent Council No. 1245 Vienna, 31 October 2019**

#### **EU Statement in response to the report by the Coordinator of OSCE Economic and Environmental Activities Amb. Vuk Žugić**

The European Union warmly welcomes the Coordinator of OSCE Economic and Environmental Activities, Amb. Vuk Žugić, to the Permanent Council and thanks him for his report. Your remarks have very well illustrated the relevance of economic and environmental issues for the security of our countries and citizens. We assure you of our continued support for strong OSCE engagement in the Economic and Environmental Dimension as an integral part of the Organisation's comprehensive approach to security. Good economic and environmental governance, combatting corruption, connectivity, sustainable and efficient use of energy as well as other issues related to sustainable development are priorities for us. In this context, we particularly welcome your efforts to further align OSCE activities with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

We thank you for highlighting in particular your work on good economic and environmental governance and the fight against corruption, and appreciate that these topics remain among the priorities of your office's activities. Strengthening good governance, inter alia through combatting corruption and fostering the rule of law, is crucial to improve the economic environment across the OSCE, which in turn contributes to stability and security. Preventing and combating corruption is among our key priorities in the Economic and Environmental dimension.

We equally appreciate the focus you put on addressing the security implications of environmental challenges. In this context, we welcome your office's activities to

promote good environmental governance, inter alia through supporting the multi-stakeholder approach of Aarhus Centres.

We also thank you for referring to the importance of good water governance as one aspect of good environmental governance. Indeed, it is a key element for sustainable development as well as for maintaining peace, security and stability. This was also acknowledged by the EU Foreign Affairs Council in November 2018 in its conclusions on water diplomacy which recognized the potential of water scarcity to affect peace and security.

Mr. Coordinator, you have rightly highlighted the digital transformation as a cross-cutting issue that increasingly affects our economies and societies, and we appreciate your commitment to continue to look for possible areas of engagement to respond to challenges and harness its potential in line with the Milan Ministerial Council deliverables on the Digital Economy and on Human capital development in the digital era. Digital technologies, if well-managed, bear high potential for improving social inclusion and sustainable economic progress, but may also create new challenges with possible security implications.

On the issue of the protection of critical energy networks, we welcome the setting up by the OSCE of a virtual competency and training centre. This project has the potential to strengthen the capacity of energy experts to identify, manage and mitigate risks to critical energy infrastructure. We would be interested in receiving more information on how this tool is expected to reach the relevant experts.

The incorporation of a gender perspective and ensuring the equal participation of men and women in all OSCE activities are essential components of the OSCE's comprehensive approach to security – and of particular importance to the EU. We welcome your commitment to fully and comprehensively mainstream gender across the activities of your office.

Exploiting synergies, joining efforts and coordinating activities among OSCE structures and with other international organizations is key in order to maximize the impact of your office's activities. We thank you for providing examples of such cooperation and encourage you to continue in this way. We equally attach great importance to the active and close cooperation with field operations and thank you

for your continued support to them. We also welcome your intention to make information about your office's work and resources more easily available to participating States. We would also appreciate more information from you on your Office's approach to monitoring and evaluating the programmes you deliver, in order to assess their impact.

In conclusion, we thank you and your team for your valuable work and wish you every success. We are ready to engage constructively in discussions on economic and environmental issues, including at the Ministerial Council in Bratislava, which we hope will produce solid and tangible results.

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 countries ICELAND, 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.

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