



EUROPEAN UNION

OSCE Permanent Council No. 1261 Vienna, 5 March 2020

EU Statement in Response to the Head of the OSCE Mission to Montenegro, H.E. Ambassador Maryse Daviet

The European Union warmly welcomes Ambassador Maryse Daviet, Head of the OSCE Mission to Montenegro, to the Permanent Council and thanks her for the report on the Mission's activities over the past year.

We welcome that the Mission continued to support the host country in achieving its national priorities. We note that the Mission focused on strengthening capacities of partner institutions, inter alia the State Election Commission (SEC) and the Parliament.

We commend the Mission for providing expert assistance and technical support to the SEC with the goal of improving transparency and public trust. We also welcome the Mission's long-standing cooperation with the Parliament, especially in relation to the strengthening of parliamentary oversight and legislative functions, as well as enhancing the capacity building of its administrative staff.

The Mission's cooperation with the Gender Equality Committee of the Parliament is a good example of the Mission's efforts to support institutions. We are pleased that its Gender Equality Committee is recognised, including at a regional level, for its success in implementing gender sensitive policies into parliamentary work. Gender equality should be a key prerequisite in implementing reforms across all sectors. We note the host country's inclusion of gender equality mainstreaming in a National Action Plan, and welcome the active participation of Montenegrin institutions and civil society in the 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence campaign.

We welcome the integrated programme approach in supporting Montenegrin institutions to Prevent and Counter Violent Extremism and Radicalization that Lead to Terrorism (VERLT), especially focusing on youth. The EU supports the Mission's promotion of youth engagement in regional, as well as national activities and its cooperation with the Regional Youth Co-operation Office (RYCO) in Montenegro.

We commend the Mission for its continued support to the development of a professional media environment and enhancing media literacy including through the cooperation with the Representative on Freedom of Media (RFoM). We appreciate the work of the Mission to improve safety of journalists and call on Montenegro to guarantee a safe climate, conducive to freedom of expression and independence of media.

We also appreciate the Mission's work on Security co-operation and Governance, especially on fighting trafficking in human beings and Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW) as well as combating illicit cross-border trafficking in cultural property. We support the implementation of the Roadmap for a sustainable solution to the illegal possession, misuse and trafficking of SALW in Western Balkans by 2024.

We appreciate that the Mission will continue to assist in strengthening the capacity and effectiveness of host country institutions to prevent and combat organized crime. We welcome that Montenegro signed an agreement with the European Border and Coast Guard Agency (FRONTEX) in October 2019 and a Joint Action Plan on Counter Terrorism for the Western Balkans with the European Commission in November.

We underline the necessity of regional cooperation and commend Montenegro in its constructive approach in fostering dialogue and supporting security cooperation in the region.

In light of the upcoming parliamentary elections this October, we note that the governing coalition submitted draft laws related to elections that were adopted by the Parliament by a simple majority, without the oppositions which have been boycotting the Parliamentary debates since the last general elections in 2016. The European Union regrets that due to the absence of a quorum, the temporary parliamentary committee for comprehensive reform of electoral and other legislation was not able to

successfully complete its work before the end of its mandate. This represents a missed opportunity to re-establish political dialogue in the parliament, to review in a comprehensive and inclusive manner the electoral framework, as well as to reach cross-party agreement on a number of deliverables which are important for Montenegro's EU reform agenda. The EU has consistently encouraged all political actors in Montenegro to bring the political debate back to the Parliament.

We welcome Montenegro's overall progress in the EU accession negotiations. Important work on alignment with the acquis in most areas has taken place. We note legal reforms and institution building activities and underline the need for further progress on the rule of law and fundamental rights.

Finally, we thank you, Ambassador, for the work done and wish you and your team success in the coming year.

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 and LIECHTENSTEIN, members of the European Economic Area, as well as UKRAINE, the REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA and GEORGIA align themselves with this statement.

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