



## **EUROPEAN UNION**

### **OSCE Permanent Council No. 1267 Vienna, 14 May 2020**

#### **EU statement on the Report by the OSCE Project Co-ordinator in Uzbekistan, Ambassador John MacGregor**

The European Union and its Member States warmly welcome H.E. Ambassador MacGregor to the Permanent Council and thank him for his comprehensive report.

We appreciate the active engagement of Uzbekistan with the OSCE. The positive dynamics include the significantly increased demand for the PCUz' programmatic activities and the abolishment of income tax for local OSCE staff since 2018. We acknowledge the efforts of the PCUz and its committed staff to provide more assistance to the government of Uzbekistan in implementing OSCE commitments in all three dimensions together with pursuing Uzbekistan's reform priorities.

With regard to the PCUz' project activities in the politico-military dimension, we welcome the focus on countering transnational threats, counter-terrorism, preventing violent extremism and radicalisation, enhancing cybersecurity and promoting human rights-compliant policing. We commend the cooperation with ODIHR on the training of Uzbekistan's law enforcement officers and encourage its continuation.

In the economic and environmental dimension, we particularly value activities aimed at promoting good governance, rule of law, increasing transparency and fighting corruption, as well as countering money laundering and terrorism financing. We appreciate the continued focus on socio-economic empowerment of women and the cooperation with the Westminster International University in Tashkent and the Business Women's Association of Uzbekistan. We welcome activities aimed at strengthening environmental aspects of security.

In the human dimension, we appreciate the PCUz' support to the national human rights strategy of Uzbekistan. We welcome Uzbekistan's constructive engagement in OSCE human dimension events and with international human rights organizations. Implementing OSCE human dimension commitments and addressing recommendations made by UN human rights treaty bodies is essential for strengthening comprehensive security. Involving civil society will support the reform process. We attach great importance to judicial reforms. We welcome that in March 2020 Uzbekistan hosted the second Central Asia Judicial Dialogue, which focused on the role of judiciary in ensuring freedom of expression and the media. We hope that the cooperation with the RFoM will further expand. We encourage the PCUz to support the government of Uzbekistan in following up on recommendations made by OSCE/ODIHR Election Observation Missions hosted by Uzbekistan in December 2019 and December 2016. We highly value the PCUz' assistance to Uzbekistan in taking robust measures against torture. Could Ambassador MacGregor elaborate in greater detail about this assistance?

Regarding cross-dimensional activities, we strongly support the focus on empowering of women and combating and preventing violence against women and girls, including through engaging men. We appreciate the assistance in addressing trafficking in human beings and eradicating forced labour. We welcome that the PCUz makes efforts to mainstream a gender perspective in all its activities and strives to ensure equal participation of women in events and study trips. We positively note that the composition of national staff of the PCUz is gender balanced.

We welcome that the PCUz' contacts with the other OSCE field operations in Central Asia have continued. Regional cooperation and approaches, sharing best practices and successful project ideas importantly contribute to regional stability and security.

With regard to the current Covid-19 crisis, we appreciate that the PCUz continues to deliver on its mandate while paying utmost attention to duty of care for its staff. We would like to hear from Ambassador MacGregor his assessment of the impact of the current crisis for OSCE project activities in Uzbekistan?

The EU supports efforts by the government of Uzbekistan in dealing with the Covid-19 crisis and provides EUR 36 million to Uzbekistan to tackle the crisis. This support addresses short-term emergency needs as well as longer-term structural impacts, reinforcing both governmental and non-governmental actions.

Uzbekistan is a significant partner of the European Union. We welcome that tangible progress has been achieved in the ongoing negotiations on the Enhanced Partnership and Cooperation Agreement with Uzbekistan. The EU continues to support the reform efforts in Uzbekistan. We attach great importance to the security, stability and prosperity of Uzbekistan and the whole region. We underline that the new EU Strategy on Central Asia focuses on promoting resilience, prosperity and regional cooperation in Central Asia. The implementation of this strategy provides a valuable opportunity for the EU and Central Asia to forge a strong and durable partnership. The promotion and protection of rule of law, human rights and fundamental freedoms, civil society, the rights of women and sustainable development, good governance, among others, remain at the core of our relations.

In conclusion, the EU would like to thank Ambassador MacGregor and his team for their dedicated work. As this is the last time Ambassador MacGregor presents the PCUz' report to the Permanent Council, we wish him all the best in his future endeavors.

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.