



## EUROPEAN UNION

### **OSCE Permanent Council No. 1275 Vienna, 16 July 2020**

#### **EU Statement in Response to the Address by the Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs of Sweden, Robert Rydberg**

The European Union warmly welcomes Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs of Sweden, Robert Rydberg, to the Permanent Council. We are grateful for the comprehensive presentation of the priorities for 2021 by the incoming Swedish OSCE Chair.

We greatly appreciate Sweden's readiness to assume the leadership of the OSCE at a critical time when the region continues facing issues of the greatest concern, notably violations of international law and of OSCE principles and commitments. We are particularly proud that it is an EU Member State that takes on this challenge, and is being followed next year by yet another EU Member State, Poland. This shows the importance the European Union attaches to this organisation. Let us reiterate that we fully support the role of the OSCE Secretary General, the three autonomous institutions and the field missions. Their strong and flexible mandates play a crucial role in supporting the OSCE participating States in the implementation of the OSCE commitments. It is the responsibility of all of us to preserve the institutions and their strong mandates.

The European Union welcomes Sweden's focus on the European Security Order and the OSCE comprehensive concept of security. Today more than ever we need to come back to the spirit and the letter of the in Helsinki Final Act and the Charter of Paris and the principles and commitments enshrined therein. We strongly believe that

cooperation for preserving regional security and stability is in all our interests: maintaining peace and security in Europe crucially depends on strict compliance with international law and full respect for the rules agreed by all 57 OSCE participating States. Today, we are still collectively confronted with many threats, challenges and violations of our OSCE principles and commitments.

We also welcome Sweden's intention to continue the focus of previous Chairmanships on the ongoing and protracted conflicts in the OSCE area. Today, we meet against the backdrop of a serious security crisis in Europe caused by the repeated violation of Ukrainian sovereignty and territorial integrity by acts of aggression by the Russian armed forces, resulting in the conflict in eastern Ukraine and the illegal annexation of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol to the Russian Federation. We strongly condemn these acts. The EU recalls its unwavering support to the sovereignty, territorial integrity, unity and independence of Ukraine within its internationally recognised borders. We call upon Russia to work with the Albanian Chairmanships and incoming Swedish one in order to seek a sustainable political resolution to the conflict in eastern Ukraine.

Conflict situations and protracted conflicts in our region pose a very serious threat to the security of the entire OSCE area. The status quo is detrimental to our security. The peaceful resolution of the existing conflicts in the OSCE area remains a priority for the EU and our positions on these conflicts are well known. The EU remains committed in its support to the territorial integrity, independence and sovereignty of all OSCE participating States. The EU supports the existing formats of negotiations and calls on all actors involved to enhance their commitment to conflict settlement. The EU will continue to promote and support confidence-building measures to assist the resolution of these conflicts, in co-operation with other relevant interlocutors.

We welcome the intention of Sweden to focus next year on democracy and fundamental freedoms, in particular the right to freedom of expression and media freedom, which are also top priorities for the European Union. The focus on fundamental freedoms is timely as we continue to see ongoing restrictions and crackdowns on human rights and fundamental freedoms, mounting pressure and attacks on human rights defenders, journalists and media actors across the OSCE area. Lasting security cannot be sustained without respect for human rights and

fundamental freedoms, democracy and the rule of law. Our OSCE commitments are more relevant than ever in these challenging times and we need to redouble the focus on their implementation. Civil society is an essential partner in this regard and we therefore remain firm about safeguarding the open and inclusive character of the OSCE in relation to civil society organizations.

We welcome Sweden's commitment to promoting existing CSBMs and arms control instruments and to using the Structured Dialogue to increase trust and lay the ground for further OSCE achievements. We highly value the Structured Dialogue, which we are ready to develop further in accordance with the Hamburg Declaration, as a transparent, inclusive process, owned and driven by participating States, without a predetermined outcome and of high relevance for the EU. We remain committed to the substantial modernization of the Vienna Document, as expressed inter alia in the Joint proposal supported by 34 participating States, as well as to the further development of Conventional Arms Control, CSBMs and other instruments in the politico-military area. We also welcome Sweden's intention to emphasise, within the Code of Conduct, the importance of democratic control over armed forces and the women, peace and security agenda.

This year we mark the 20th anniversary of the landmark UNSC Resolution 1325. We agree with the incoming Chair that increased attention should be paid to the empowerment of women through promoting their participation in conflict resolution and peace processes, as well as in the security sector. We are committed to actively support further actions within the OSCE in this area, including the adoption of an OSCE-Wide Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security.

The upcoming 10th anniversary of the Vilnius Ministerial Council Decision 3/11 on the Elements of the Conflict Cycle provides a valuable opportunity to take stock and assess the work done in its implementation, as well as to identify and work towards overcoming the remaining obstacles to its full implementation. In order to achieve that, sufficient resources must be provided through the Unified Budget. The European Union reiterates its support for the efforts intended to advance the implementation of the Decision.

We also welcome the focus within the First Dimension on transnational threats, cybersecurity, as well as on activities linked to the financing of illicit activities.

Regarding the Economic and Environmental Dimension, we welcome Sweden's decision to put women's economic empowerment and gender equality to the forefront of your priorities. We support your intention to build on the efforts of the Albanian Chairmanship by focusing on fighting corruption and strengthening good governance. We believe that the OSCE is well equipped to complement the UN work on sustainable growth and countering environmental security challenges in line with the 2030 Agenda, also in the framework of post COVID-19 recovery. We welcome that a balance between economic and environmental activities will be ensured. We therefore welcome the incoming Chair's focus on these topics. Based on the Ministerial Council Decisions from Hamburg and Milan, we attach great value to the use of connectivity as a confidence-building measure.

We also commend Sweden for its successful current chairing of the Mediterranean Partners for Co-operation Group and look forward to the OSCE Mediterranean Conference later this year. The challenges we face go beyond the borders of our Organization and we believe that the security of the OSCE area is inextricably linked to that of the Mediterranean region, as reaffirmed by our Ministers in Milan in 2018.

Dear Deputy Minister, this year, we celebrate the 45th anniversary of the Helsinki Final Act and the 30th anniversary of the Charter of Paris for a New Europe. From next year on, it is your task to rebuild trust and respect for the principles and commitments enshrined in these founding documents. This is a crucial task, and let me assure you that you can count on the full support of the European Union and its Member States in all your endeavours.

The Candidate Countries REPUBLIC of NORTH MACEDONIA\*, MONTENEGRO\* and ALBANIA\*, the EFTA countries ICELAND and 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 and Albania continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.