



EUROPEAN UNION

OSCE Permanent Council No. 1257 Vienna, 30 January 2020

EU Statement in Response to the Address by the President of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe, H.E. David Zalkaliani

1. The European Union warmly welcomes to the Permanent Council the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Georgia and President of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe, H.E. David Zalkaliani.
2. Your Excellency, we congratulate you and Georgia for assuming the Presidency of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe, the first Georgian Presidency ever to this international organization, which coincides also with the 20th anniversary of your country's membership in the Council of Europe. We have listened with interest to your priorities and planned events as Chair of the Committee of Ministers and we thank you for your presentation.
3. Your country has assumed the Presidency at a time characterized with multiple challenges to security, peace and democracy. As the oldest European institution, the Council of Europe sets the framework, or the "gold standard" as former Secretary General Jagland put it, in the field of human rights and rule of law. Through its conventions system, it has an impact even beyond Europe since many countries, which are not members of the Council of Europe, have signed up to them.
4. A sustainable political solution in line with OSCE principles and commitments to the conflict in and around Ukraine remains a top priority for the EU. We expect the OSCE and its institutions, as well as the Council of Europe, to remain actively seized of the dire situation of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the Ukraine's Autonomous Republic of

Crimea and the City of Sevastopol since its illegal annexation by Russia, which we condemn and do not recognize.

5. The European Union's commitment to peaceful conflict resolution in Georgia remains as strong as ever and we stand with your country in solidarity and with our firm support to your sovereignty and territorial integrity within internationally recognized borders. The human rights and humanitarian situation in the Georgian regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia continues to deteriorate and the matter should be urgently addressed and all the negative trends reversed. Particular attention should be given to ensuring freedom of movement and unhindered access to these regions for international missions and organisations, including the EU Monitoring Mission in Georgia and the Council of Europe. We call on Russia to fulfil its obligations under the EU-mediated ceasefire agreement of 12 August 2008.
6. The focus of your Chairmanship, *inter alia*, on increasing the civil participation in decision-making process, and on strengthening democracy through quality and inclusive education and through youth engagement could not be timelier in our common aim to build democratic and inclusive societies, thus addressing also many of the challenges that we are confronted with in the OSCE area.
7. We also welcome your focus on human rights and environmental protection and your willingness to strengthen the work of the Council of Europe in this field. The European Union remains fully committed to increase environmental protection.
8. Cooperation between the EU and the Council of Europe is longstanding and it is based on the shared values of human rights, democracy and rule of law. Our strategic partnership aims at ensuring coherence and complementarity between the two organisations. Our relationship remains solid and represents a milestone for the protection of human rights in a vast area of the world. In this context and as we mark the 70th anniversary of the European Convention on Human Rights, we reaffirm our commitment to the EU's accession to the Convention, with the objective to reinforce the common values of the Union and enhance the coherence of fundamental rights protection in Europe.
9. While being two different organisations, the OSCE and the Council of Europe have a common goal: the promotion of peace, stability and security on the basis of democracy, rule of law and respect for human rights in Europe and beyond. For both the Council of Europe and the OSCE, the implementation of existing obligations and commitments by all members and participating States is essential. The judgements of the European Court of Human Rights must be executed.

10. The cooperation between the OSCE and the Council of Europe should be based on using each other's comparative advantages, whilst fully respecting mandates, building synergies and avoiding duplication.
11. We welcome the continuous dialogue and practical cooperation in the identified four priority areas: fight against terrorism, combatting trafficking in human beings, promoting tolerance and non-discrimination and protection of rights of persons belonging to national minorities.
12. Besides the four focal areas, co-operation could be further continued or pursued in other areas such as torture prevention, opposing the death penalty, media freedom, including safety of journalists, or human rights education, moreover since education features among the priorities of your Chairmanship.
13. The Council of Europe and the OSCE should coordinate their work on combating and eliminating violence against women and girls. On one hand within the Council of Europe, we have one of the most comprehensive international treaties on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence, and on the other we have an impressive body of OSCE commitments, complemented with thematic reports, data collection and projects of the OSCE institutions, structures and field missions. Cyber-violence against women and girls constitute a growing concern for our modern societies. We thank you for addressing this very particular challenge and we look forward to the planned event on the Digital Dimension of violence against women.
14. Election observation and assistance in ensuring that electoral systems meet international standards are extremely important areas for both organisations. International election observation activities and assistance in matters related to elections are enhanced when the OSCE/ODIHR, the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe and European Parliament work in partnership. We encourage continued cooperation and coordination.
15. We also continue to encourage the well-established cooperation between ODIHR and the Venice Commission in presenting legal reviews or in elaborating common Guidelines on specific topics, as well as the close cooperation between the HCNM and the Venice Commission.
16. Your Excellency, the European Union stands in solidarity by a democratic, stable and prosperous Georgia. We look forward to strengthening further cooperation with Georgia to

advance political association and economic integration and to deliver on the joint commitments under the Association Agreement.

17. We wish you, Your Excellency, every success in the exercise of your mandate. Thank you.

The Candidate Countries REPUBLIC of NORTH MACEDONIA*, MONTENEGRO*, ALBANIA* and the EFTA countries ICELAND, LIECHTENSTEIN and NORWAY, 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.