



EUROPEAN UNION

OSCE Permanent Council No. 1447 Vienna, 19 October 2023

EU Statement in Response to the Head by the OSCE Mission in Kosovo, Ambassador Michael Davenport

1. The European Union warmly welcomes the Head of the OSCE Mission in Kosovo^{*1}, Ambassador Michael Davenport and thanks him for his biannual report to the Permanent Council.
2. We reiterate our strong support for the valuable work carried out by the OSCE Mission in Kosovo, which has proven itself as a trusted partner of all communities and contributes to a safe and secure, as well as a democratic, prosperous and multi-ethnic Kosovo, based on respect for human rights, fundamental freedoms and the rule of law, including the rights of persons belonging to minorities.
3. The EU welcomes the Mission's balanced approach based on three programmatic pillars: human rights and communities, democratisation, and security and public safety. We value the Mission's continued involvement in targeted projects and activities dedicated to priority issues such as freedom of expression and media freedom, gender equality and women's empowerment, as well as active youth and civil society, to name just a few.
4. The EU welcomes the Mission's activities on promoting inter-community relations. Strengthening coordination with relevant stakeholders for the protection of the rights of persons belonging to minorities and vulnerable groups, including their safety and the protection of their property rights, including against contentious expropriations along with

¹ * This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSCR 1244/1999 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence.

the protection of their cultural and religious heritage, including the Special Protective Zones, should remain high on the Mission's agenda. In this context, the 2016 Constitutional court ruling on the land dispute case in Decani must be implemented. We also welcome the Mission's support for the development and adoption of cultural heritage management plans in Kosovo.

5. Improving the accountability and transparency of institutions remains equally important. We commend the Mission's continued assistance to strengthening the capacities of Kosovo's democratic institutions and its focus on enhancing public safety, the rule of law and transparent and inclusive good governance at central and local level. The EU highly values the Mission's contribution to enhancing Kosovo's inter-institutional co-operation in addressing security challenges and risks related to trafficking in human beings, terrorism leading to extremism, organised crime and corruption, as well as hate crimes and discrimination. We pay special attention to the Mission's activities in support of Kosovo's reform agenda. A recent example in that field is its contribution towards the adoption on 8 June 2023 of the new Law on General Elections as part of Kosovo's multi-year electoral reform. We reiterate our appreciation for the engagement of the Mission in the implementation of the EU-funded OSCE Regional Trial Monitoring Project in the Western Balkans (2021-2023), which contributes to strengthening the rule of law in Kosovo by supporting a more effective administration of justice in corruption and organised crime cases.
6. We praise the Mission's efforts to improve Kosovo's media environment and the continued focus on freedom of expression, increasing media literacy and safety of journalists. In addition, we highlight the importance of engagement with civil society, including through youth-oriented activities, aimed at enhancing inter-ethnic relations and promoting dialogue.
7. The EU is closely monitoring the developments in the north of Kosovo. The EU condemns in the strongest possible terms the hideous terrorist attack against Kosovo Police officers in Banjska/Banjskë on 24 September, which left one police officer dead and three injured in the events that followed. All facts about the attack need to be established and the responsible perpetrators must be held accountable and face justice, so that such attacks will not be repeated. The EU is closely following the ongoing investigations and expects Serbia to fully cooperate, including in preventing smuggling

through the administrative boundary line. In parallel to the investigations, it is important that both sides refrain from any action that could further escalate the situation.

8. In addition, the EU reiterates its condemnation of the violent incidents in the north of Kosovo following the early elections held in April 2023 and the assumption of office by the newly elected mayors. Only 3.4% of the local population participated in the elections in the Serbian-majority municipalities of Leposavić/q, North Mitrovica/e, Zvečan/Zveçan, and Zubin Potok. An attack in Zvečan/Zveçan on 29 May left more than 93 NATO soldiers and several dozen civilians and policemen injured. The EU and its Member States urge all actors to work to de-escalate the situation. Swiftly holding new early elections in all four municipalities in the north of Kosovo remains crucial to help defuse the tensions. A sustainable political solution for these municipalities can only be achieved through the permanent return of Kosovo Serbs to the institutions and full participation in the election process. We take good note of the announcements made by President Vucic and Srpska Lista on the participation of Kosovo Serbs in the local elections in the north of Kosovo.
9. The EU appreciated the Mission's monitoring and early warning activities in light of the fragile and complex security environment in the north of Kosovo. In this context, we welcome its continued good cooperation and coordination with the partners on the ground, including the EULEX, KFOR, EU and the UN in support of multilateral efforts aimed at de-escalation of tensions and implementation of the obligations under the EU-facilitated Dialogue.
10. We reiterate that there is no alternative to the EU-facilitated dialogue. In line with the statements issued by HRVP Borrell on behalf of the EU Member States on 3rd June and 19th September this year, the EU calls on both sides to return to the dialogue, fully implement all obligations and past commitments, including the establishment of the Association/Community of Serbian-majority Municipalities, and constructively re-engage in the process. The Agreement on the Path to Normalisation, reached by the sides earlier this year, offers a clear platform for normalising their relations. The obligations stemming from this Agreement remain valid and binding. Its implementation is urgent and crucial for the stability of the entire region and the respective European paths of both sides.
11. Finally, with a strong interest in political and security consolidation in the region, the EU remains determined to continue to assist Kosovo towards lasting stability and prosperity.

We wish you Ambassador Davenport and your dedicated team every success and assure you of the EU's resolute support in your important work.

The Candidate Countries TÜRKIYE, NORTH MACEDONIA*, MONTENEGRO*, ALBANIA*, UKRAINE, and the EFTA countries ICELAND and LIECHTENSTEIN, members of the European Economic Area, as well as SAN MARINO align themselves with this statement.

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