



EUROPEAN UNION

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EU Statement on the Report by the Head of the OSCE Programme Office in Nur-Sultan, Amb. Szabó

The European Union warmly welcomes Ambassador Szabó back to the Permanent Council and thank him for his comprehensive report.

The 20th anniversary of the OSCE Programme Office has been celebrated during the reporting period. We underline our appreciation for the contribution of the Programme Office in advancing Kazakhstan's development in all three dimensions. We acknowledge Kazakhstan's envisaged development as outlined in the Strategic Development Plan and its long-term reform agenda. With the new President and Kazakh Government, we expect that the Programme Office will continue to provide its valuable contributions. We reaffirm the support for and the importance that the EU attaches to the continued OSCE presence and work in all three dimensions in Kazakhstan.

On this occasion, we would like to highlight the adoption of the new EU Strategy on Central Asia focusing 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 for the mutual benefit of their citizens. The promotion and protection of rule of law, human rights and fundamental freedoms, civil

society, the rights of women and sustainable development, among others, must remain at the core of the relations.

We take positive note of the regional engagement of the Programme Office in Nur-Sultan, including with other OSCE Field Operations, and of the increased synergies that the report describes regarding other international stakeholders. We particularly commend cooperation with the EU Border Management Programme in Central Asia (BOMCA) and bilateral cooperation with some of the EU Member States.

We welcome that the Programme Office has continued and strengthened its longstanding cooperation with local partners, including with civil society, media, academia, and business community.

We appreciate the work carried out by the Programme Office throughout the year with the Central Election Commission to address the modernization of the voting processes. We call on Kazakhstan to address the shortcomings identified by the Election Observation Mission on the Presidential Elections and to make use of the expertise that the Programme Office, together with ODIHR and other OSCE institutions, can provide in this regard.

We thank for the programmatic highlights that the report recapitulates. We appreciate the approach chosen which emphasizes working on police and judicial reforms, strengthening accountability and transparency of governmental institutions as well as rule of law, promoting tolerance in the multi-ethnic and multi-religious society and gender-mainstreaming. We commend using a train-the-trainer-approach and addressing and including youth and civil society in the activities. We call on to moving further in that direction.

With regards to the large reform processes in the judiciary and the police mentioned, we would appreciate further information which activities have started so far within the respective extra-budgetary projects, which would be the next steps, and which are the remaining gaps with regard to the overall scope and aim of the projects.

In the Politico-military Dimension, we welcome the topics and activities chosen, including addressing transnational threats (TNT), radicalization (VERLT), or working on the returning of Foreign Terrorist Fighters, while promoting human rights and fundamental freedoms, as well as countering cybercrime, promoting exchange in the military co-operation such as on the Vienna Document 2011, and enhancing border security.

We appreciate activities involving the public in legislative activities. We would appreciate further information on how you would continue the dialogue on countering hate speech and how capacities could be strengthened in that field.

In the second Dimension, we welcome the Programme Office's continued work on promoting good governance, with a view to combating corruption, money laundering, as well as terrorism financing and strengthening national financial institutions. We welcome the Office's assistance to the Government's reform for the transition to a green economy, including supporting discussions on a new Environmental Code, the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA), and working on regional water management.

In the Human Dimension, we commend the Programme Office for continuing the promotion of human rights and fundamental freedoms, the rule of law and the strengthening of democratic institutions as the core of the comprehensive security approach. We welcome continued cooperation with National Human Rights Institutions, with the Ombudsman and with the Advisory and Consultative Board on Human Dimension (HDDP) under the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, as well as with the Supreme Court, General Prosecutor's Office and the Constitutional Council. We also welcome the Office's focus on the implementation of a "zero tolerance" policy towards torture by strengthening the National Preventive Mechanism (NPM). We attach great importance to human rights and fundamental freedoms together with effective cooperation with civil society. Bearing this in mind and taking into account the international election observation mission's preliminary findings and conclusions on the latest presidential elections, we encourage to again take up Freedom of Assembly as a topic of the Programme Office's assistance to

the Government's strategy.

We appreciate the information provided on achievements in order to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of the Programme Office's work and encourage to continue working that way. Finally, we recall our position that local staff salaries should be exempt from income tax, and repeat our request that the Kazakh Government introduces legislation to this effect.

In the framework of our EU Enhanced Partnership and Cooperation Agreement with Kazakhstan, together with this week's adoption of the new EU Central Asia Strategy, the European Union stands ready to further support reforms to strengthen the promotion and protection of fundamental freedoms and human rights, the respect for democratic principles, the rule of law and good governance. We look forward to advance EU-Kazakhstan relations more broadly.

In conclusion, we thank Ambassador Szabó for his report and wish him and his staff well for their work throughout the 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 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.