



EUROPEAN UNION

**OSCE Permanent Council N° 1203
Vienna, 22 November 2018**

**EU Statement in Response to the Report of the Head of the
OSCE Mission to Skopje, H.E. Ambassador Clemens Koja**

The European Union and its Member States warmly welcome H.E. Ambassador Clemens Koja, Head of the OSCE Mission to Skopje, to the Permanent Council for the first time in his new capacity and thank him for his timely and comprehensive report.

The EU welcomes the priorities of the Mission, as outlined in the report, in particular: continuing to support the implementation of the Ohrid Framework Agreement and the advancement of constructive inter-ethnic relations; supporting implementation of the Government's ambitious reform agenda in areas covered by the Mission's mandate, such as in police and law enforcement; the rule of law and justice sector, including the Special Prosecutor's Office; media freedom and safety of journalists; democratic governance reforms; the strengthening of the Parliament; addressing transnational threats, including organized crime, cybercrime, trafficking in human beings and violent extremism that leads to terrorism; and providing early warning on emerging security-related developments throughout the country.

As far as the Politico-Military Dimension is concerned, we highly appreciate the Mission's continued monitoring of political and inter-ethnic developments, including through its field station in Tetovo, and the provision of early-warning on emerging security-related developments. In particular, by applying early-warning analytical tools, the Mission is providing the participating States, the Secretariat and the Chairmanship with timely information and analysis of political events, in an impartial and non-partisan manner. The EU would be very interested in having an

assessment as to what extent the analytical tools developed for the early-warning of the Mission in Skopje might be of use to other OSCE-Missions in the Western Balkans as well.

With regard to the Human Dimension, we fully support the Mission's Programme to pro-actively support the host country in advancing constructive inter-ethnic relations and social cohesion, and bridging divisive trends in society in particular by paying special attention to promoting integrative policies, such as in the area of education. We appreciate the focus on the most vulnerable communities, including Roma.

The European Union fully supports the Mission's continuous efforts on building strong institutions based on democratic governance and promoting the rule of law and the independence of the judiciary. We commend the continuing efforts of the Mission to promote a modern police service complying with international standards, including respect for human rights, to strengthen community policing, and the fight against organised crime and terrorism. Would it be possible to know the percentage of the police officers currently in service that have undergone some form of OSCE training? Also we would be interested in the Mission's activities related to the government's Plan 18.

We also welcome the focus since mid-2017 on media freedom and safety of journalists by working closely with all relevant stakeholders as well as with the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the media. We would be interested in hearing what you would identify as the major difficulties that journalists encounter in their work.

The Mission's work on cross-dimensional issues such as Countering Violent Extremism, counter-terrorism, transnational threats, combating trafficking in human beings and work on migration is also appreciated.

We fully support your intention to ensure that the Mission's Gender Strategy and corresponding Gender Action Plan are implemented. We

also support the engagement for furthering gender mainstreaming and the work against Gender-Based Violence.

We warmly welcome the support provided by the Mission to the Regional Youth Cooperation Office Local Branch Office.

The EU has consistently reaffirmed its commitment to the European perspective of the Western Balkans, in line with the Thessaloniki Agenda and in accordance with the Copenhagen criteria, the conditionality of the Stabilisation and Association process and European Council and Council Conclusions, including regional co-operation and good neighbourly relations. It is in this framework that the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia has been granted the status of candidate country.

We recall, as set out in European Council and Council conclusions, that maintaining good neighbourly relations, including a negotiated and mutually accepted solution to the name issue under the auspices of the UN, is essential. We recall that the Council strongly welcomed the signature of the agreement on the name issue with Greece, which brings the longstanding discussions to a conclusion, and looks forward to the ratification and implementation of this agreement. We also recall that the Council welcomed the conclusion of the Treaty on Friendship, Good - neighbourliness and Cooperation with Bulgaria and stressed the importance of its continued implementation. These two major steps should put an effective end to any claims based on misinterpretation of history.

We also recall the 26th of June Council's conclusions, that the decision to open accession negotiations with the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia will be subject to completion of national parliamentary procedures and the endorsement by the European Council and swiftly thereafter be followed by the first Intergovernmental Conference by the end of 2019, depending on progress made.

The EU welcomes the decision taken by a two-third majority of the Parliament of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia on October 19 of this year to initiate the necessary legal and constitutional procedures required to bring about the name change as agreed in the Prespa-agreement. This decision follows on the consultative Referendum of September 30 this year, in which an overwhelming majority of citizens who exercised their right to vote said yes to the Prespa agreement and their European path. In this context, we appreciate the Mission's objective and impartial reporting during the referendum.

The EU would like to underline again that a historic moment has been reached, not only for reconciliation in the region, but also for decisively moving the country forward on its European Union path, which the EU will continue to fully support.

The EU would like to underline that although progress has been made, in particular in good neighbourly relations, tangible and concrete results are needed, especially judicial reforms and proactive investigations, prosecutions and final convictions in corruption and organized crime cases, intelligence and security services reform and public administrations reform. In this context, we look forward to the continuation of dialogue with all stakeholders including the opposition.

Finally, we would like to assure you, Ambassador, of our full support and wish you and your team success in your important work.

The Candidate Countries 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.

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