



EUROPEAN UNION

**OSCE Permanent Council Nr 1101
Vienna, 26 May 2016**

**EU Statement in Response to the Address by the Chair of
Ministers of the Council of Europe and Foreign Minister of
Estonia, Marina Kaljurand**

Madame Foreign Minister,

It is a great pleasure for the European Union to warmly welcome you to the Permanent Council of the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe. We congratulate you and Estonia for assuming the Chairmanship of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe. We have listened with interest to your priorities and planned activities as Chair of the Committee of Ministers, and we thank you for your presentation.

Madame Minister, your visit comes at a critical moment for the OSCE and European security as a whole. European security and peace has been recently jeopardised over the past two years following Russia's illegal annexation of Crimea and Sevastopol and its actions destabilising the situation in Ukraine. The wider implications of Russia's violations of basic OSCE principles represent a significant challenge. What is at stake are the fundamental principles that have provided a solid cornerstone for our area in the last 40 years. Our region has also seen an increase in other challenges, such as terrorism, and the migration and refugee crisis.

The European Union welcomes the priorities of the Estonian Chairmanship of the Committee of Ministers. The OSCE and the Council of Europe share common values and principles. Estonia's Chairmanship of the Council of Europe provides an opportunity to build on existing efforts and strengthen cooperation on core issues of human rights, fundamental freedoms, democracy and rule of law. Both at the political level and strategic levels, between representatives of both organisations as well as among experts on the ground. We for instance welcome the ongoing work on

combating trafficking in human beings, and in the field of elections observation and assistance. We likewise appreciate further cooperation in other areas where joint work has already proven productive, including freedom of media, human rights education, improving the situation of Roma and Sinti, and combating discrimination on the ground of sexual orientation and gender identity. We also welcome the work of the Council of Europe on counter-terrorism and the fight against cyber-crime.

Madame Minister, you also spoke about the rights of children. The protection and promotion of the rights of the child remains an integral part of EU policies and actions.

In conclusion, we thank you once again for sharing your views with us today. We wish you every success in the future.

The Candidate Countries the FORMER YUGOSLAV REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA*, MONTENEGRO* 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 UKRAINE, the REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA, GEORGIA, ANDORRA and SAN MARINO align themselves with this statement.

* The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro and Albania continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.