



EUROPEAN UNION

OSCE Permanent Council No. 1470 Vienna, 25 March 2024

EU Statement in response to the Address by the Secretary General of the Council of Europe, Ms. Marija Pejčinović Burić

1. The European Union warmly welcomes back to the Permanent Council the Secretary General of the Council of Europe, Ms. Marija Pejčinović Burić.
2. Madame Secretary General, as the Council of Europe celebrates its 75th anniversary, it continues to play a leading role in the promotion of human rights, democracy and the rule of law on the continent. These core values remain fundamental, especially in times when they are increasingly contested on various fronts. The creation of an advanced human rights system, common legal standards based on more than 200 human rights conventions, including the European Convention on Human Rights, and a death-penalty free zone are major achievements. Work continues on topical themes such as artificial intelligence, and environment and human rights. We underline the indispensable work of the European Court of Human Rights and call for the full execution of the Court's judgments by all its Member States. We look forward to the upcoming Session of the Committee of Ministers at ministerial level on 16-17 May. It will also provide an opportunity for the follow-up of the Reykjavík Summit and Declaration.
3. Russia's unprovoked, unjustifiable and illegal war of aggression against Ukraine, which we condemn in the strongest possible terms, has had a dramatic impact on European security. Russia bears full responsibility for its war of aggression against Ukraine and all its consequences. We urge Russia to ensure full compliance with international law, including international human rights law and international humanitarian law.

4. We fully support the Council of Europe in its efforts to support Ukraine and ensure Russian accountability. In 2022, due to Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine, the Committee of Ministers terminated Russia's membership in the organisation. The Register of Damage for Ukraine is a significant first step towards delivering justice for the victims of Russian aggression and we welcome the fact that the Register became operational on 2nd April 2024, as announced at the international Ministerial Conference "Restoring Justice for Ukraine" in The Hague. The Council of Europe also facilitates efforts towards a compensation mechanism and a special tribunal for the Russian crime of aggression. The organisation's Action Plan for Ukraine contributes to the rebuilding and recovery of the country.
5. We regret that, as a result of Russia's war of aggression, Russian citizens no longer benefit from the protections granted by the European Convention on Human Rights. This is highly alarming as it further worsens the already dire human rights situation in the country. We reiterate that Russia remains obliged to execute the judgments of the Court related to the cases brought before it until September 2022. The European Union strongly supports human rights defenders, democratic forces, free media, and independent civil society in Russia.
6. Madame Secretary General, the EU priorities for cooperation with the Council of Europe in 2023-2024 underline the EU's commitment to further strengthening our strategic partnership with the Council as a main institutional partner in political, legal, and financial terms. The EU reaffirms its commitment to accede to the European Convention on Human Rights with the objective of reinforcing the common values of the Union and enhancing the coherence of human rights protection in Europe.
7. We welcome and reiterate our support for the regular dialogue and active cooperation between the OSCE and the Council of Europe. The two organisations share a common goal in promoting stability and security on the basis of democracy, rule of law and respect for human rights in Europe. As our multilateral system of cooperation is under challenge, it is vital for the security of Europe that our organisations work together to support each other's strengths. While we acknowledge the continued relevance of the four identified priority areas for enhanced cooperation, we believe there is scope for further broadening our cooperation, particularly between OSCE field operations and Council of Europe offices on the ground. We should, for example, continue to work together to ensure a space for civil society and human rights

defenders, the safety of journalists and media actors, as well as to combat all forms of gender-based violence.

8. In conclusion, the EU looks forward to continuing the close cooperation with the OSCE and the Council of Europe. We would like to take this opportunity, Ms. Pejčinović Burić, to thank you for leading the Council of Europe with dedication in such turbulent times and wish you success in the exercise of your mandate for the rest of your term.

The Candidate Countries NORTH MACEDONIA*, MONTENEGRO*, ALBANIA*, UKRAINE, the REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA, BOSNIA and HERZEGOVINA*, and GEORGIA, the EFTA country ICELAND, members of the European Economic Area, as well as ANDORRA and SAN MARINO align themselves with this statement.

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