



## EUROPEAN UNION

### OSCE Forum for Security Co-operation N°1065 Vienna, 13 December 2023

---

#### EU Closing Statement

---

1. Dear Ambassador, during your Chairpersonship the unimaginable and inconceivable remained a terrible reality when Russia, through its illegal, unprovoked and unjustified war of aggression inflicted death, suffering and utter devastation on Ukraine. With such appalling and shocking violations, Russia has blatantly attacked the very core of our organisation's principles and commitments and is alone responsible for these brutal and senseless acts. The EU and its Member States categorically condemn Russia's actions.
2. The beginning of your Chairpersonship started in a challenging period when Russia continued its attempts to paralyse this Forum and the entire organisation. The situation has since deteriorated further. After the Russian delegation blocked the agenda of the Forum for the first time in its history in the first trimester of this year, they repeated this disruptive behaviour on two more occasions since then. We, once again, call on the Russian Federation to cease this very objectionable practice.
3. Nevertheless, under your leadership, Madam Chair, we were able to address a number of important topics that have become even more relevant and timely since Russia's full scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, with the support of Belarus. These discussions, coupled with presentations by the panellists, highlighted their relevance and how closely they are encompassed within the FSC mandate.
4. Mine action continues to be a major issue in the OSCE area and is unfortunately becoming more and more relevant as Russia's illegal war of aggression continues. Progress in removing existing mines and explosive remnants of war and reducing the number of these remaining threats is stalling, as we now know that Ukraine has become one of the most mine-contaminated areas in the world due to Russia's full scale war of aggression. The EU and its Member States reaffirm their strong commitment to support achieving mine clearance in the OSCE area.

5. Inexcusably, our discussion on International Humanitarian Law was the first one to be blocked by Russia, despite the patent necessity to address the matter. The absolute importance of continued discussion on, and complying with all OSCE principles and commitments and especially, the OSCE Code of Conduct on Politico-Military Aspects of Security cannot be emphasised enough, particularly as Russia continues its merciless onslaught and barbaric attacks on Ukraine, its independent and sovereign neighbour.
6. The importance of effective implementation of international humanitarian law was also evident during the mass exodus of Karabakh Armenians following Azerbaijan's military operation in Nagorno-Karabakh on 19-20 September and the months' long blockage of the Lachin corridor. In this regard, we welcome the joint statement by Armenia and Azerbaijan announcing the mutual release of detainees and confidence-building measures and reconfirming the intention to conclude a peace treaty on the basis of respect for the principles of sovereignty and territorial integrity. This is an important political step.
7. As Russia persists with its devastating war of aggression against Ukraine, the WPS agenda, including the situation of women and girls in conflicts and wars warrants our full attention, with reports emerging on cruelties of widespread conflict-related sexual and gender-based violence in Ukraine.
8. The joint FSC-PC meeting on mental health further highlighted the devastating impact that Russia's war of aggression has on people's mental health and well-being. Mental injuries, both to civilians and armed forces personnel, may not appear as visible as physical wounds, but they are just as harmful in terms of lasting damage. It is estimated that in Ukraine alone millions of people may require psychological support and treatment as a result of war-related trauma and stress.
9. Regretfully, Russia also blocked the security dialogue on information integrity in the military space, while at the same time demonstrating the point of this specific dialogue by consistently making use of this Forum to spread disinformation. Nevertheless, the related side event clearly underlined the relevance of this topic in the OSCE's politico-military dimension.
10. Dear Ambassador, despite the attempts of Russia to undermine the work of this Forum, this organisation, and the European security architecture itself, you were

able to keep us focused with relevant and important discussions. We commend you and your team's excellent work in these last four months.

11. Let us now welcome Cyprus as the future chair and wish them every success in these difficult times. As we bid farewell to Bulgaria as a troika member and welcome Croatia as a new member, we know that we will still benefit from Canada's continued presence in the troika.

Thank you.

The Candidate Countries NORTH MACEDONIA\*, MONTENEGRO\*, ALBANIA\*, UKRAINE, REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA and BOSNIA and HERZEGOVINA\*, the EFTA country LIECHTENSTEIN, the member 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.