

Spanish Presidency of the European Union

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EU statement in response to the address by the Chairperson-in-Office, Secretary of State and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Kazakhstan, H.E. Kanat Saudabayev

The EU congratulates H.E. Mr. Kanat Saudabayev, Secretary of State and Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Kazakhstan on the assumption of the functions of Chairman-in-Office of the OSCE. As the first representative of a Central Asian country to assume this highly demanding responsibility, you and your country are faced with high expectations. The Kazakh Chairmanship will open a new chapter in the history of our organization, underlining the importance of the Central Asian region and increasing the attention paid by the international community, the media and civil society not only to that region but to the whole of the OSCE. We warmly welcome you to the Permanent Council for the first time in your new capacity and thank you for your address outlining the priorities and the roadmap of the Kazakh Chairmanship in 2010.

Please convey to President Nazarbayev our appreciation for his video address, which is evidence of the importance attached by Kazakhstan to your Chairmanship. We welcome that, as President

Nazarbayev has pointed out today and you stated at the Athens Ministerial Council, Kazakhstan is firmly committed to the fundamental principles and values of the OSCE and that you will endeavour to ensure that all three dimensions of the Organization's work are given equal attention.

Mr. Chairman,

The EU stresses the fundamental importance of the OSCE comprehensive concept of security, which includes at its core the promotion and respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, democracy and the rule of law.

We share your concern that there is a deficit of political trust and confidence which also affects the ability of this Organization to contribute to the security of OSCE area and act decisively in times of crisis and conflict. The adoption in Athens of a Ministerial Declaration and a Ministerial Decision on the Corfu Process signals that the OSCE is ready to play its part in those challenges. The European Union has contributed substantially to this process since its beginning, and will continue to do so in the months ahead.

The Corfu Process has firmly anchored the dialogue on the future of European Security in the OSCE. We need to be ambitious by taking concrete steps to restore trust and confidence between Participating States and to strengthen our capacity to address challenges in all three dimensions, including those posed by protracted conflicts. Progress must be comprehensive, and our aim should be an OSCE Plus, not an OSCE à la carte. In this context, we thank Austria, as the host country of the OSCE, for its continuing contribution in

facilitating the dialogue among the participating States, the Secretariat and the institutions of the OSCE.

The presentation by the end of June of an interim report on the Corfu Process will be an important benchmark; we are ready to start our work as soon as possible.

The EU has taken note of the various proposals that you have made and will examine them thoroughly and in a constructive spirit.

We need a strong political will to move the OSCE agenda forward. As regards the question of a Summit, the EU recalls its statement at the conclusion of the Athens Ministerial Council that we are open to the convening of a high-level meeting, provided that it is motivated by substance. .

Our work will also proceed in parallel to other deliberations in the field of conventional arms control, including on the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe. Progress must be made in this context so that the benefits of this landmark regime can be preserved for the future. We look forward to the upcoming review conference on the Open Skies Treaty.

The politico-military dimension has an important role in the context of the Corfu process; we are satisfied that the Ministerial Decision adopted in Athens reinforces the coordination between the PC and the FSC, and that Joint FSC – PC Meetings are to be at the centre of our endeavour. In this same field, the Decision Relevant to the Forum for Security Cooperation and the Decision on Small Arms and

Light Weapons, provide a substantive and important Agenda for this year.

Our work will also be very intense concerning the non – military aspects of security. The Ministerial Council in Athens outlined a series of tasks in the areas of Trans-national Threats, Travel Security, Terrorism, and Police activities, including several Conferences and Workshops. We are confident that our discussions and conclusions in this area will also be useful in the context of the Corfu Process.

We note the importance you attach to the Economic and Environmental Dimension of the Organisation, also relevant to the Corfu Process. The EU shares Kazakhstan's concerns in the field of environmental security. We support efforts to increase dialogue and cooperation, including at the regional level, in areas, such as energy security, the security implications of Climate Change and water management. We also look forward to the implementation, under your Chairmanship, of the relevant Athens Ministerial Decisions concerning the Economic and Environmental Dimension.

The EU fully understands the challenges faced by landlocked countries like Kazakhstan and, in this regard, we look forward to a fruitful outcome of the 18th OSCE Economic and Environmental Forum, also with respect to an improved governance of border crossings, in order to contribute to better security and stability as well as to economic dynamism in Central Asia and in the OSCE area as a whole.

Mr. Chairman,

The promotion of and respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, democracy and the rule of law are at the core of the OSCE comprehensive concept of security. We naturally look to the Chairmanship to exemplify the OSCE commitments and therefore look forward to the further progress with internal reforms that you have spoken of today.

Turning to our work this year in the human dimension, we note with appreciation the intention of the Kazakh Chairmanship to implement a full programme of events, in line with well-established practice in this area, and we also note the important role of this dimension in the Corfu Process. We appreciate the Chairmanship's engagement in the field of tolerance and non-discrimination and welcome the holding of a comprehensive high-level conference in Astana. We also welcome the Chairmanship's focus on gender equality and consider it important to continue the valuable work done in combating trafficking in human beings.

But we believe we must also focus our work this year on other human dimension commitments, including those concerning human rights, fundamental freedoms, democratic institutions and the rule of law. Other issues that the EU believes deserve particular attention this year include freedom of association and assembly, freedom of expression and media, respect for human rights in fighting terrorism, prevention of torture and abolition of the death penalty, and –as you mentioned- the rule of law. We would like to see all these issues reflected in the OSCE calendar of events for 2010.

We pay tribute to the excellent work of the Office of Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, the OSCE Representative for the Freedom of the Media and the High Commissioner on National Minorities and reaffirm our full support to their autonomy and impartiality. We therefore appreciate your commitment to continue to support their work

Turning now to election observation activities and methodology, ODIHR has - in good cooperation with a number of international institutions including those of the European Union - set an international standard of objectivity and impartiality. The EU calls on all participating States to invite ODIHR to observe, without any restriction, their elections in accordance with their commitments, and values continued close co-operation between the ODIHR and the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly.

Mr. Chairman,

The EU appreciates Kazakhstan's statement of support for the Organisation's field missions. We believe that they play a very important role in promoting progress in all three dimensions, and in helping the host countries to implement the shared commitments we all have freely endorsed. We also value their insightful reporting.

We also consider that civil society and NGOs play an essential role in helping participating States to meet their commitments. Free and open dialogue among representatives of NGOs, OSCE institutions and participating States, in accordance with the 1992 Helsinki document, remains of paramount importance and should continue on this basis, including participation of NGOs in OSCE events. In this

regard, Human rights defenders and independent national human rights institutions deserve our respect and full support.

Mr Chairman,

We need to address protracted conflicts with a view not only to prevent their extension or aggravation, but indeed to solve them through political means. We are looking forward to working closely with the new Special Representative of the Chairman in Office, Ambassador Bolat Nurgaliev.

The European Union will continue to follow the situation in Georgia very closely. We reiterate our support for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Georgia within its internationally recognised borders. We deplore the failure to reach an agreement to continue OSCE presence throughout Georgia, in 2009, on the basis of proposals by both the Finnish and Greek Chairmanships. We therefore urge you to explore all possibilities to bring the OSCE back to Georgia. The Geneva Talks are key in order to strengthening confidence, security and stability in the region. We hope that the next meeting, due to take place on the 28th of January, will be fruitful.

Concerning Transnistria, we call for the resumption, as soon as possible and without preconditions, of negotiations in the 5 + 2 format, the only framework to guarantee the transparency and legitimacy to a lasting solution. We encourage all sides to work in good faith towards this end.

On Nagorno – Karabakh we are confident that progress towards an agreement on the Basic Principles submitted in Madrid 2007 will be achieved this year. The EU supports and is ready to assist the efforts of the Minsk Group.

We deem important to strengthen the cooperation with our Mediterranean and Asian Partners. We welcome your intention to pay particular attention to Afghanistan. The EU is making a major contribution to its reconstruction and stabilisation, in agreement with the Afghan government and the donor community. This country is facing serious security challenges which may impact on Central Asia as well as on the whole OSCE region. We consider that OSCE's engagement in Central Asia is essential to help stabilise Afghanistan in line with Ministerial Decision 4/07 on OSCE engagement with Afghanistan.

The EU attaches importance to the effectiveness and well-functioning of the OSCE, and commends the Kazakh Chairmanship of the ACMF on the timely approval of the 2010 Unified Budget. We hope the same excellent stewardship and the same spirit of compromise will allow the OSCE to resolve all outstanding issues in the field of management and finance.

The EU also reiterates its full support for the adoption of the Convention on the international legal personality, legal capacity, and privileges and immunities of the OSCE and welcomes your readiness to work towards this objective.

Mr. Chairman,

You have outlined today an extensive workplan including many events in all dimensions. The EU is ready to fully engage in discussions concerning the substance for these events.

In conclusion, security within the OSCE area will remain an important priority for our external action. The Lisbon Treaty constitutes yet another step to enable the European Union to take forward its responsibilities in this regard. The European Union would like to assure you of its cooperation and full support for the Kazakh Chairmanship-in-Office, wishing you and your team all the best throughout the year.

Thank you.

The candidate countries TURKEY, CROATIA* and the FORMER YUGOSLAV REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA*, the countries of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidate countries ALBANIA, BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA, MONTENEGRO and SERBIA, the European Free Trade Association countries and members of the European Economic Area ICELAND and LIECHTENSTEIN align themselves with this statement.

* Croatia and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process