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## **STATEMENT BY THE EUROPEAN UNION AT THE 1158th (SPECIAL) MEETING OF THE OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

29 September 20217

### **On countering violent extremism and radicalization that lead to terrorism**

We thank the Chairmanship, and in particular the Federal Minister for Europe, Integration and Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Austria, Sebastian Kurz, for the importance given this year to preventing and combating violent extremism and radicalization that lead to terrorism, and in particular the place given to the role of young people. In May, the annual Counter-Terrorism Conference and the accompanying social media communication campaigns gave young people a voice that all the partners could hear. The voices of the mayors of several major cities of the OSCE during the Security Day in March provided an essential local perspective in the prevention of violent extremism and radicalization. Lastly, gender mainstreaming and the essential role of women in responding to this phenomenon have been debated in the Security Committee. We owe it to our young people, families and communities to demonstrate our commitment on the ground. Declarations alone will not be enough to prevent violent extremism and radicalization that lead to terrorism.

We welcome the report on good practices presented today by the Special Representative of the OSCE Chairperson-in-Office on Countering Radicalization and Violent Extremism, Professor Peter Neumann, and we applaud the analysis of the factors contributing to violent radicalization, which he has carried out since the beginning of this year after visiting several OSCE countries, including a number of EU Member States and the European institutions in Brussels, in order to collect good practices. This presentation shows us new areas in which we can carry out our activities, based on solid research that has proven effective in preventing the causes of violent extremism and radicalization that lead to terrorism.

While we are all united in combating terrorism, we also believe it is essential to be united in defending human rights and the role of civil society. This is the other dimension of this struggle. As we prosecute those responsible for these terrorist crimes, we must defend and strengthen human rights and democracy and promote tolerance. This response offers the best antidote to violent extremism and provides our young people with security and a peaceful future. States must retain the leading role when it comes to the safety and education of their citizens, but civil society can play a role that governments cannot: for example, a positive and peaceful discourse will be more credible and understood if it comes from the communities themselves.

As highlighted by the speakers, the OSCE, through the various activities carried out by the Secretariat, autonomous institutions and field missions, brings added value and tailored support to the participating States and we encourage them to take advantage of the OSCE's cross-functional competencies. In this regard, we should like to thank the Secretary General for updating his 2016 report, which clearly highlights the growing interest of field missions in responding to this threat. While the 2016 report already emphasized the role of young people in preventing and combating violent extremism and radicalization that lead to terrorism, your presentation once again places them at the forefront, with the importance of increasing the resilience of communities and taking human rights into account. We appreciate your desire to work together and strengthen all the OSCE's dimensions, particularly when it comes to addressing the issue of the rehabilitation and reintegration of foreign terrorist fighters and radicalized persons.

Some points on EU policy in this area:

The EU strategy to combat terrorism includes violent extremism and radicalization that lead to terrorism. Its implementation rests on four pillars: prevention, protection, pursuit and response. The effects of this policy are reflected in the continued increase in convictions for terrorism-related activities, but also in the decline in communications of the so-called Islamic State, according to Europol data, which also found that in 2016 the discourse had evolved from a victorious approach, likely to attract new combatants to it, to an approach of revenge.

The EU is also actively involved in preventive actions, for example in the Middle East and North Africa, regions which are very close to the OSCE area and where the OSCE maintains a partnership with several countries. Its objectives are to:

- Contribute to strengthening the capacities of State actors who play an essential role in countering terrorism and violent extremism;
- Develop partnerships between governments, young people and local communities to address the triggers that make communities vulnerable to violent extremism.

In conclusion, we believe that the OSCE can still do more to combat and prevent radicalization and violent extremism, using its strengths (cross-functional approach, autonomous institutions, field missions, platform for the exchange of good practices) and by continuing its co-operation with other international organizations. Today, the reports of Professor Peter Neumann and the Secretary General offer us a number of avenues that need to be studied carefully so that our future activities can be more effective.

The candidate countries the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia<sup>1</sup>, Montenegro<sup>1</sup>, Serbia<sup>1</sup> and Albania<sup>1</sup>, the country of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidate Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Free Trade Association countries and members of the European Economic Area Iceland and Liechtenstein, as well as Ukraine, Georgia, and Andorra, align themselves with this statement.

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1 The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Albania continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.