



**EUROPEAN UNION**

**OSCE Permanent Council No 1129  
Vienna, 26 January 2017**

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**EU statement in response to the Address by the Chair of the  
Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe, Minister of  
Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Cyprus, Mr. Ioannis  
Kasoulides**

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Mr. Foreign Minister,

It is a pleasure for the European Union to warmly welcome you to the Permanent Council of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe. We congratulate you and the Republic of Cyprus 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.

You have assumed the Chairmanship at a time when we are faced with unprecedented challenges to our security and peace. Russia's illegal annexation of Crimea and Sevastopol and its actions in eastern Ukraine represent a significant challenge to our fundamental principles. Furthermore we are observing an increase in terrorism, violent extremism and radicalisation. We are also seeing higher migration and refugee flows, as well as manifestations of intolerance and discrimination. Therefore, the focus of Cyprus' Chairmanship on human rights and fundamental freedoms for all people without any discrimination, democratic citizenship and prevalence of the rule of law could not be more timely and provides an opportunity to build on existing efforts and strengthen cooperation between our organisations.

We are convinced that a youth perspective is essential when dealing with issues such as preventing radicalisation, dealing with migration or promoting tolerance and non-discrimination. We are also convinced that the great potential of youth in the creation of democratic and inclusive societies must not be wasted.

Mr. Minister, we welcome your intention to focus on building synergies with international and regional partners. This year the European Union and the Council of Europe celebrate ten years of cooperation on the basis of shared principles of human rights, democracy and rule of law. The Memorandum of Understanding signed in 2007 has enhanced the multi-faceted cooperation between the two organizations. We welcome your efforts to mark this anniversary through various events.

The OSCE and the Council of Europe have a well-established and long-lasting relationship, based on shared principles, the European Convention on Human Rights and other legal instruments, as well as on a common goal: the promotion of peace, stability and security on the basis of democracy, rule of law and respect for human rights in Europe and beyond.

We welcome the continuous dialogue and practical cooperation between the OSCE and Council of Europe, which underline the complementarity and mutually reinforcing nature of the two organisations. We welcome the ongoing work in the identified priority areas: fight against terrorism, combatting trafficking in human beings, promoting tolerance and non-discrimination and protection of rights of persons belonging to national minorities. We likewise appreciate further cooperation in other areas where joint work has already proven productive, including freedom of the media, election observation, improving the situation of Roma and Sinti, and combating discrimination on the ground of sexual orientation and gender identity.

Mr. Minister, we thank you once more for sharing your views with us today and 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.