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## **STATEMENT BY THE EUROPEAN UNION AT THE 1200th MEETING OF THE OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

8 November 2018

### **In response to the Co-Chairs of the OSCE Minsk Group, the Personal Representative of the Chairperson-in-Office on the Conflict Dealt with by the OSCE Minsk Conference and the Head of the High-Level Planning Group**

The European Union welcomes the Co-Chairs of the Minsk Group, Igor Popov, Stéphane Visconti and Andrew Schofer, the Personal Representative of the Chairperson-in-Office, Ambassador Andrzej Kasprzyk, and the Head of the High-Level Planning Group (H LPG), Colonel Vladimir Minarik, and thanks them for their detailed reports.

The European Union reiterates its support for the Minsk Group and its full confidence that the Co-Chairs will push forward the search for a fair and lasting political settlement to the conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh, which is essential for the region's future. We urge the parties to continue to make the most of the efforts by the Co-Chairs.

The European Union welcomes the renewed contact by the authorities of Armenia and Azerbaijan in New York on the margins of the latest session of the United Nations General Assembly and the impetus given by the leaders of the two countries during their informal discussions on the margins of the summit of the Commonwealth of Independent States in Dushanbe, which produced constructive initiatives that were all the more notable for being implemented straightaway: reducing tensions on the ground and setting up mechanisms for direct communication between the parties, including at the highest level.

We urge the maintenance of this dynamic and call on the parties to set about resuming the settlement process with determination as soon as possible, in the interests of the populations and of regional stability.

The European Union has taken note of the new meetings organized by the Co-Chairs of the Minsk Group and the Personal Representative of the OSCE Chairperson-in-Office in Armenia and Azerbaijan between 29 October and 2 November, with the participation of local representatives of the International Committee of the Red Cross and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, two major international actors whose impartial activities contribute to rapprochement between the countries and to the future implementation of the settlement.

Like the Co-Chairs, the European Union considers it important to maintain a climate of trust to ensure sustained negotiations on the settlement of the conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh and welcomes the agreement by the Ministers for Foreign Affairs to continue their dialogue and to meet again before the end of the year.

The European Union is attentively monitoring the development of the situation in Nagorno-Karabakh, which remains fragile in spite of the considerable reduction in the level of violence since the Dushanbe meeting. It reiterates its commitment to a peaceful settlement of the conflict on the basis of the fundamental principles of the Charter of the United Nations and the Helsinki Final Act.

The European Union remains involved through its Special Representative Toivo Klaar, whose activity it warmly commends, in particular to support efforts to settle the conflict. Jean-Christophe Belliard, Deputy Secretary-General of the European External Action Service (EEAS), and Luc Devigne, EEAS Director for Russia, the Eastern Partnership, Central Asia and the OSCE, also recently visited the region. The European Union is engaged through the European Partnership for the Peaceful Settlement of the Conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh, its programme for facilitating contacts between societies divided by the conflict, and reaffirms its support for all programmes, particularly those within this framework, which help reconcile the civil societies and foster peaceful exchanges between the populations. It remains willing to implement other confidence-building measures, in support of and in full complementarity with the Minsk Group.

The European Union would also like to take this opportunity to thank the Italian Chairmanship for the discussions the Director General for Political and Security Affairs Sebastiano Cardi had with the Co-Chairs in New York, and the future Slovak Chairmanship, whom the Co-Chairs will be meeting tomorrow in Bratislava, for their commitment.

Mr. Chairperson,

We should like to reiterate our very positive appreciation of the work carried out, sometimes under difficult security conditions, by Ambassador Kasprzyk, the Personal Representative of the Chairperson-in-Office on the Conflict Dealt with by the OSCE Minsk Conference, and his team. The European Union attaches the greatest importance to his continued unhindered monitoring of the ceasefire at the line of contact and along the Armenia-Azerbaijan border.

We thank Ambassador Kasprzyk for all of his work, which contributes without question to reducing tensions in the region and is a valuable means of implementing confidence-building measures on the ground. Since the closure of the mission in Yerevan, the office of the Personal Representative is the only OSCE presence in the region.

Mr. Chairperson,

The European Union welcomes Colonel Vladimir Minarik on the occasion of his first statement to the Permanent Council and pledges its full support to him and to the HLPG, whose analyses and work will be useful in due course.

We should also like to take this opportunity to thank the Secretary General and the Secretariat, particularly the Conflict Prevention Centre, for the relevance of their contributions.

We repeat that the deployment of any peacekeeping operations in the conflict zone is contingent on the mandatory conclusion of an agreement on the modalities for a peaceful settlement by the parties under the auspices of the Minsk Group. The participation of the HLPG team in the Personal Representative's monitoring activities is still necessary, however, to maintain the high level of attention to the situation. We once again welcome the co-operation by the HLPG with the other international organizations on the ground, such as the United Nations and the European Union. The OSCE's comprehensive approach in the region is an added value in its peacekeeping role.

Finally, the European Union reiterates its commitment to working closely with the parties to promote stability and prosperity, consolidate democracy and the rule of law in the region and strengthen its co-operation with them, particularly in the framework of the Eastern Partnership.

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 European Free Trade Association countries and members of the European Economic Area Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway, as well as the Republic of Moldova, Georgia and San Marino, 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.