



EUROPEAN UNION

**OSCE Permanent Council Nr 982
Vienna, 30 January 2014**

**EU Statement in Response to the Address by the Austrian
Federal Minister for European and International Affairs,
H.E. Sebastian Kurz**

Mr Foreign Minister,

It is a great pleasure for the European Union to welcome you to the Permanent Council of the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe. It gives us an opportunity to express our sincere gratitude to you in person for the warm hospitality and support with which your government has hosted the OSCE and our delegations for many years. Your support not only shows the commitment of Austria to the OSCE, but also highlights once again the long-standing position of Vienna as a major diplomatic capital.

Mr Chairman,

Minister Kurz has provided us with a number of reflections on the OSCE, and set our work within its historical context. It is indeed important to remind ourselves where we have come from in order to determine where we have to go and there is no shortage of lessons to learn from the tragedies and unspeakable crimes of the 20th century in Europe.

For this reason, the European Union believes that we should take up the platform which our organisation offers us to make progress in establishing an indivisible security community. A security community which is based on the respect and promotion of human rights and fundamental freedoms, and on democracy and the rule of law. Without that, as we continue to see every day, and as Minister Kurz has rightly pointed out concerning the situation in Ukraine, there can be no real security either for States or individuals. Even though the OSCE is an intergovernmental organisation of States, we should always bear in mind that the ultimate aim and the primal responsibility of every State is to preserve the security and the rights of each

individual. We are here to hold each other accountable for that commitment, and to do so in a spirit of dialogue and cooperation.

Mr Chairman,

The OSCE, the Council of Europe and the European Union share common values and principles. Austria's Chairmanship of the Council of Europe provides a wonderful opportunity to build on existing efforts to strengthen the coherence and coordination of the work of both organisations, especially in the areas of democracy, human rights and the rule of law. We appreciate the continuous dialogue and practical co-operation that takes place between the OSCE and the Council of Europe and underline the mutually reinforcing nature of our two organisations. We should reinforce these joint efforts, at the political and strategic level; between representatives of both organisations; as well as on the ground in countries where our organisations and the European Union are active in supporting progress and reform.

The OSCE and the Council of Europe already cooperate in a number of areas, including the fight against terrorism, combating trafficking in human beings, addressing tolerance and non-discrimination and protecting and promoting the rights of persons belonging to national minorities. We feel that cooperation could be further pursued in other areas where joint work has already proven productive, including Freedom of Media, human rights education, improving the situation of Roma and Sinti, and combating discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation and gender identity. We therefore welcome the upcoming joint events on combating trafficking in human beings, and discussions in the Council of Europe on cybercrime and violence against women. We hope that these initiatives will lead to greater awareness and contribute to resolving problems associated with these issues.

Election observation and assistance in ensuring that electoral systems meet international standards are extremely important areas for both organisations. International election observation activities and assistance in matters related to elections are enhanced when the OSCE/ODIHR, the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe and the Venice Commission work in partnership. We encourage continued co-operation and coordination.

Mr Chairman,

The OSCE has a rich history of which it can be proud. Our founding principles and commitments have helped to reunify our continent. The “Helsinki + 40 process” will certainly help us to reflect deeper on what we should concentrate on in the years ahead, and how we can work more efficiently. That should include continuing to consider how we can make better use of the comparative advantages of the OSCE and the Council of Europe, whilst fully respecting mandates and avoiding duplication. In doing so, the European Union looks forward to continuing to work with the very able and dedicated Austrian team here in Vienna.

Mr Chairman, I would like to once again sincerely thank Minister Kurz for sharing his ideas on the OSCE and the Council of Europe and we wish him every success in the future.

The Candidate Countries the FORMER YUGOSLAV REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA*, MONTENEGRO*, ICELAND+ and SERBIA*, the Country of the Stabilisation and Association Process and Potential Candidate BOSNIA and HERZEGOVINA, as well as the REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA, ANDORRA and SAN MARINO align themselves with this statement.

* The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.

+ Iceland continues to be a member of the EFTA and of the European Economic Area.