



## EUROPEAN UNION

### **OSCE Permanent Council (Special) No. 1298 Vienna, 14 January 2021**

#### **EU Statement in response to the Address by the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Sweden, Ms Ann Linde**

The European Union warmly welcomes the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Sweden Ms Ann Linde to the Permanent Council. We are proud that yet another EU Member State shoulders the important role as Chairperson of the world's largest regional security organisation. We also take this opportunity to warmly welcome our former colleague Ms Helga Schmid in her new role as OSCE Secretary General and assure her of our full support.

Foreign Minister Linde, the European Union welcomes your clear focus on our common principles and joint commitments enshrined in the Helsinki Final Act and the Charter of Paris for a New Europe. These principles and commitments constitute the foundation of the European security order. As multilateralism and the belief in a rules and rights based order are a cornerstone of the EU external policy, you can count on our support in your efforts to lead in restoring respect for these principles and commitments and upholding them as our shared responsibility.

We agree with you that lasting security cannot be sustained without respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, democracy and the rule of law. In this regard, we welcome the CiO's focus on these issues, in particular the right to freedom of expression and media freedom, all top priorities for the EU. The focus is timely as we continue to see ongoing restrictions and violations of human rights and fundamental freedoms, mounting pressure and attacks on political and civic

activists, human rights defenders, journalists and media actors in the OSCE area. Civil society is an essential partner when it comes to implementation and we therefore remain firm about safeguarding the open and inclusive character of the OSCE in relation to civil society organizations. In this regard we hope that the cycle of the human dimension events will be fully implemented.

Democracy, fundamental freedoms and the rule of law have come under unprecedented and severe attack in Belarus in the run-up to the 9 August 2020 elections and their aftermath. We appreciate that the offer extended last year by then CiO PM Rama and yourself to facilitate a genuine inclusive national dialogue between the authorities and the opposition in Belarus still stands. We fully support it and promote such approach with all international actors. We call on the Belarus authorities to accept it and follow up on it in good faith.

We share your view that the resolution of the conflicts in our region must be kept high on the agenda. For the 7<sup>th</sup> consecutive year, we continue to condemn the acts of aggression by the Russian armed forces in eastern Ukraine and Russia's illegal annexation of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol and call on Russia to reverse these actions. In this regard, the EU welcomes Sweden's continued focus on finding a sustainable political resolution to the conflict in eastern Ukraine. The EU recalls its unwavering support to the sovereignty, territorial integrity, unity and independence of Ukraine within its internationally recognised borders. We also reiterate the importance of granting the SMM safe and unhindered access throughout the entire territory of Ukraine.

The resolution of the protracted conflicts in our region remains a top priority for the European Union. The EU continues to support the OSCE Minsk Group and its Co-Chairs in finding a negotiated and lasting political settlement of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. We stand ready to contribute effectively to the shaping of a durable and comprehensive settlement and to support the initiatives of the Minsk Co-Chairs as well as those of the Personal Representative of the CiO. We welcome the Declaration from the Tirana Ministerial Council underlining that the Permanent Conference on Political Issues in the Framework of the Negotiation Process for the Transnistrian Settlement in the "5+2" format is the only mechanism to achieve a

comprehensive and sustainable settlement and hope to see a result-oriented meeting soon. In the context of a peaceful resolution of the conflict in Georgia, we also welcome the resumption of in-person meeting of the Geneva International Discussions and hope that these meetings will be able to continue in 2021 in accordance with established practice and frequency with a view to restoring Georgia's sovereignty and territorial integrity within its internationally recognized borders.

The EU welcomes the emphasis on gender equality in all aspects of OSCE's work. We highlight the role of the OSCE in implementing the Women, Peace and Security agenda within its area, and welcome your focus on promoting the participation of women in conflict resolution and peace processes.

The EU reiterates its firm support for the work and mandates of the OSCE field missions, the OSCE Secretariat and the autonomous institutions, ODIHR, RFoM and HCNM, and we look forward to continuing our excellent cooperation. We support the efforts of the Swedish CiO on the OSCE Unified Budget and hope that a consensus will be reached soon in order to provide the Organization and its new leadership with the necessary resources to fulfil their tasks. We also support the efforts of the Swedish CiO to find a consensus on long-term and fair scales of contributions.

We firmly believe that the full implementation and further development of the existing commitments in the politico-military dimension is essential for enhancing military transparency and political stability in the OSCE area. In this context, we call for the modernisation of the Vienna Document and we urge all participating States to engage in this effort in 2021, taking due account of all proposals on the table, including the joint proposal supported by 34 participating States. We emphasize the need to work towards creating an environment conducive to reinvigorating Conventional Arms Control and CSBMs. We also value the Structured Dialogue as a meaningful State-owned and State-driven process for in-depth exchanges on the current and future challenges and risks to security in the OSCE area and we actively support it. Honest and genuine engagement by all participating States is key to this end.

Our region is facing new threats, in particular in cyberspace, which can lead to destabilizing and cascading effects with enhanced risks of conflict. The EU therefore attaches great importance to cyber/ICT security issues. We believe that the confidence-building measures developed by the OSCE constitute a valuable tool to reduce the risks of conflict stemming from the use of ICTs, and will continue to actively support their full implementation.

We welcome Sweden's decision to put women's economic empowerment at the forefront of the priorities in the Economic and Environmental Dimension. We support your intention to follow up on the successful work of the Albanian Chairmanship focusing on fighting corruption and strengthening good governance. We stress the importance of addressing environmental and climate challenges, and look forward to building on our efforts last year in identifying a way forward and updating our commitments. The OSCE is well equipped to complement the UN work on addressing these challenges including in the context of the post COVID-19 recovery, which has to be sustainable, inclusive and with the protection of the environment at its core.

The challenges we face in the OSCE area go beyond the borders of our Organization. In accordance with the 2018 Milan Declaration on Security and Co-operation in the Mediterranean, we continue to encourage participating States to revitalise the OSCE's commitment to the Mediterranean which should remain a priority. Following last year's initiative to devote two PC meetings to review our co-operation with the Asian and Mediterranean Partners respectively, and the adoption of the 2020 Tirana Declaration on Co-operation with the OSCE Asian Partners, positive consideration should be given to the possibility of continuing this practice.

Foreign Minister Linde, we thank you for taking up the role as OSCE Chair during these challenging times. We are certain that you, supported by the Troika and the Secretary General, will lead this Organisation in a steady and effective manner. We once again underline our strong support and wish you success in the year ahead.

The Candidate Countries REPUBLIC of NORTH MACEDONIA\*, MONTENEGRO\* and ALBANIA\*, and the EFTA countries ICELAND and LIECHTENSTEIN, members of the European Economic Area, as well as UKRAINE, the REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA, ANDORRA and SAN MARINO align themselves with this statement.

\* Republic of North Macedonia, Montenegro and Albania continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.