



## EUROPEAN UNION

### OSCE Permanent Council No. 1234 Vienna, 4 July 2019

#### **EU Statement in Response to Current Issue raised by the Russian Federation**

We take note of the statement delivered by the Russian Federation.

Respecting and protecting the human rights of migrants have always been at the cornerstone of EU migration policies and external action, basing our action on a range of principles including non-discrimination, upholding human rights, responsibility, non-refoulement, access to justice and the best interest of the child.

The actions of the EU and its Member States for promoting and protecting the rights of migrants have been multidimensional and include: humanitarian protection, fighting against trafficking in human beings and smuggling of migrants, facilitating integration processes in the EU member states, offering safe and legal pathways, addressing the root causes that lead people to leave their homes including by providing opportunities for people in their countries of origin.

The fate of unaccompanied children during and after their journeys through the Middle-East, North-Africa and Europe remains a matter of great concern.

Protection and promotion of the rights of the child is a priority for the EU. The welfare and specific needs of unaccompanied children need to be taken into account, including when they seek asylum in the EU, in accordance with the principle of the best interests of the child. This covers, among others, identification and registration, appropriate reception conditions, for example placement with adult relatives, foster families or appropriate accommodation centres, access to procedural safeguards, including appointment of a guardian.

The European Commission developed an Action Plan on Unaccompanied Children,

having at its core the fundamental principles of "the best interest of the child", with a view of ensuring coherence, strengthen cooperation within the EU and with countries of origin and transit.

Moreover, a considerable sum has been earmarked under EU funding programmes to target the protection of children in migration and more have been earmarked by EU Member States to improve their reception capacities.

Measures include capacity building in child protection systems for children in migration access to education, child-friendly spaces, projects to promote early identification and prevention of trafficking of children, and emergency support measures.

Europol together with Eurojust are active in helping dismantle networks involved in the smuggling and trafficking of children.

The on-going EU/CSDP operations in the Mediterranean target both migrant smuggling and human trafficking.

Mr. Chairperson,

The EU is committed to combating all forms of intolerance and discrimination. The fight against all forms of discrimination and the promotion of tolerance go hand in hand with the promotion and universal protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms. When combatting discrimination, the EU promotes an inclusive and comprehensive approach on combating all forms of intolerance and discrimination, based on the universality of human rights, as reflected also in the OSCE commitments.

EU anti-discrimination legislation is among the most extensive in the world. Attacks on people for what they look like, what they believe, and who they are is an affront to the EU's and OSCE's core values, a criminal offence and is punishable by law. The EU is well aware of the importance of addressing racism and xenophobia, and commends all efforts to fight these dangerous phenomena.

While upholding the fundamental right to freedom of expression, the EU has been stepping up its action in this area, not only by enforcing relevant legislation on combatting racist and xenophobic speech and crime, but also by working with key actors on actions that can make a real difference on the ground, for instance through dialogue with IT companies on how to counter hate speech online, which incites violence and hatred, including towards migrants and refugees.