



**EUROPEAN UNION**

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**EU Statement in response to the Address by the Chair of  
the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe,  
Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign and  
European Affairs of Croatia, H.E. Marija Pejčinović Burić**

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It is a pleasure for the European Union to warmly welcome Her Excellency Marija Pejčinović Burić, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign and European Affairs of Croatia, to the Permanent Council of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe. We congratulate you and Croatia for assuming for the first time the Chairmanship of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe. We have listened with interest to your priorities and planned events as Chair of the Committee of Ministers and we thank you for your presentation.

Your country has assumed the Chairmanship at a difficult time when we are faced with unprecedented challenges to our security, peace and democracy. Therefore, we fully support you in your aim to further promote and strengthen democratic values, human rights and the rule of law.

We welcome the specific focus of the Croatian Chairmanship on the fight against corruption, efficient protection of rights of persons belonging to national minorities and vulnerable groups, decentralization in the context of strengthening the local government and self-government, and the protection of cultural heritage and cultural routes. We welcome the attention given to combating trafficking in human beings, and look forward to the "Conference marking the 20th Anniversary of the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities and the European Charter of Regional or Minority Languages". We also look forward to the Conference "From Education to Employment of Roma", with a special focus on Roma youth, as this is a topic to which both EU and OSCE could bring added value based on their continuous engagement and activities. Moreover, freedom of expression and media freedom are key priorities and the focus on promoting media literacy could not be more timely in

today's diverse media landscape, as citizens need new skills to effectively engage with the variety of media actors. The discussions on the role of free and independent media in preventing and monitoring corruption that you plan for later in the year could also represent an opportunity to connect the work of our organisations. As regards the protection of cultural heritage and cultural routes which feature prominently in Croatia's priorities, we look forward to working with you in further promoting the fundamental goals and initiatives set by the EU in the Year of Cultural Heritage 2018.

The European Union and the Council of Europe have a long established cooperation on the basis of shared principles of human rights, democracy and rule of law. Our strategic partnership aims at ensuring coherence and complementarity between the pan-European Council of Europe and the EU's integration process. Our relationship remains solid and represents a milestone for the protection of human rights in a vast area of the world. We count on you to further strengthen our cooperation and we assure you of our full support.

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 appreciate the ongoing work in the priority areas that we identified in 2005: fight against terrorism, the protection of rights of persons belonging to national minorities, combatting trafficking in human beings, as well as promoting tolerance and non-discrimination. We also use this opportunity to stress, once more, that for both the Council of Europe and OSCE, the implementation of existing obligations and commitments by all members and participating states is essential. With regard to the Council of Europe, we call on all countries to respect the obligations arising from membership. The judgements of the European Court of Human Rights must be implemented; every member should be looking to deepen its cooperation with the Council of Europe when addressing serious domestic issues; and budgetary contributions should not be used as a means of pressure in pursuit of a political agenda.

We thank you once more for sharing your views with us today and we wish you every success in fulfilling the priorities of the Croatian Chairmanship of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe, as well in all your future endeavours.

The Candidate Countries the FORMER YUGOSLAV REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA\*, MONTENEGRO\*, SERBIA\* and ALBANIA\*, the Country of the Stabilisation and Association Process and Potential Candidate BOSNIA and HERZEGOVINA, and the EFTA countries ICELAND, LIECHTENSTEIN and NORWAY, members of the European Economic Area, as well as UKRAINE, GEORGIA, ANDORRA and SAN MARINO align themselves with this statement.

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