



EUROPEAN UNION

OSCE Permanent Council Nr 1003 Vienna, 5 June 2014

EU Statement in Response to the Report by the Head of the OSCE Office in Tajikistan, H.E. Ambassador Markus Mueller

The European Union and its Member States warmly welcome Ambassador Mueller back to the Permanent Council and thank him for his comprehensive report.

We continue to place an emphasis on Tajikistan remaining a priority area for OSCE support across all three dimensions of security. The Office plays an important role in assisting the government to implement key reforms. Noting that the OSCE operates in 11 areas in Tajikistan, we urge a focus on those areas where our Organisation has a recognised added value. We underline that for all field operations effective evaluation is essential to ensure efficient use of resources and aids the development of best practice and of lesson learning. We thank you for highlighting some of the key impacts made by the Office in Tajikistan through its programmatic work in this reporting period.

We commend the Office for its collaborative approach to setting its priorities through the inclusive Task Force process which we note is now being considered for adoption elsewhere. Similarly, we are pleased to see that this collaborative approach increasingly extends to cooperation with other OSCE missions, particularly the Centre in Bishkek, and encourage you to develop this trend further. We also welcome the expanding inclusion of Afghan officials in training programmes.

We regard the Human Dimension as an essential component of the Office's work. We appreciate the government's willingness to continue to engage with ODIHR on electoral reform, especially in view of the Parliamentary elections to be held next year and repeat our expectation that the Tajik authorities effectively address the restrictions and irregularities mentioned in ODIHR's final report. During last year's Presidential elections we were seriously concerned by the lack of pluralism, narrowing political space. We remain seriously concerned about the continuing harassment of opposition figures and media, as well as the media freedom situation in general. We therefore find the Office's work on political dialogue particularly valuable as a means of fostering inclusion and allowing a wider range of opinions from all sections of society to be heard. We take note of the benefits of dialogue as a means of de-escalating a potentially serious outbreak of violence in Khorog last month and trust that the government will follow up its commitment to establish a genuinely independent commission to investigate the event.

We again welcome legislative and policy developments against torture and prevention of domestic violence, and call for effective implementation in order to strengthen the rule of law. We believe that the Office is well placed to assist in this regard.

We welcome the government's approval of the "Police Reform and Action Plan on Implementation" which identifies community policing as a top priority; events such as those in Khorog would indicate the need for police reform. We believe the Office is well placed to assist in its implementation, drawing also on the experience of the Centre in Bishkek. We also support Office assistance to the Government in developing a national strategy to counter Violent Extremism and Radicalisation (VERLT) which will respect freedom of belief and other fundamental freedoms and human rights.

Last year we welcomed legislative improvements related to torture prevention and called for their effective implementation. We were particularly heartened therefore by the start of compensation payments to victims' families and the prosecution of law enforcement officers. We see this as a significant step forward in the field of human rights and encourage Tajikistan to continue to fully embed and observe these new provisions. Like you, we welcome continuing discussion on legislative reform, whilst calling for effective and genuine implementation of new measures.

We continue to support the valuable work of both the Office and the Border Management Staff College (BMSC) in the area of Border Security. However, given the Office's work in support of the National Border Management Strategy, we are disappointed that this is not being implemented as anticipated and trust that revisions will be both timely and positive. We regret that it was not possible to include the BMSC in this year's Unified Budget, as it was initially proposed. We value the work of the BMSC and believe that it should be placed on a more sustainable financial footing.

In the second dimension, we welcome the Office's increasing engagement on anti-corruption and good governance which constitute the principal barriers to economic progress. Improvements in these areas will contribute to internal stability and security.

In conclusion, we would like to thank Ambassador Mueller and his staff in Dushanbe and in the field offices for their dedicated work and offer our support for your stated priorities in 2015. We note that these do not include any specific third dimension issues but trust that these issues will be embedded across the work of the Office.

The Candidate Countries the FORMER YUGOSLAV REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA*, MONTENEGRO*, ICELAND+ and SERBIA*, the Countries of the Stabilisation and Association Process and Potential Candidates ALBANIA and BOSNIA and HERZEGOVINA, and the EFTA country NORWAY, member of the European Economic Area 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.