



EUROPEAN UNION

OSCE Permanent Council No. 1494 Vienna, 31 October 2024

EU Statement in response to the report by the Project Co-ordinator in Uzbekistan, Ambassador Antti Karttunen

1. The European Union warmly welcomes Ambassador Antti Karttunen to the Permanent Council and thanks him for the comprehensive report. We wish you success in your endeavours as the newly appointed OSCE Project Co-ordinator in Uzbekistan (PCUz).
2. Your presentation comes at a grim time for the OSCE and the OSCE region, as Russia's war of aggression has raged in Ukraine for almost 1,000 days. We condemn in the strongest possible terms Russia's unprovoked, unjustifiable and illegal war of aggression against Ukraine, and we reiterate our call on Russia to end this senseless war immediately.
3. We commend the PCUz for its continued efforts across all three dimensions, as well as in cross-dimensional topics. We also support the host country in implementing OSCE principles and commitments together with Uzbekistan's reform priorities.
4. We appreciate Uzbekistan's strengthened engagement with the OSCE, facilitated by the PCUz. The national strategy, '*New Uzbekistan 2030*', serves as a guiding framework, demonstrating Uzbekistan's commitment to reform, including through a number of joint projects by the PCUz with governmental authorities and civil society. The EU appreciates that most of the current Strategy's goals are in line with OSCE commitments.
5. We note the results of the projects and activities carried out by the PCUz and support continued activities, particularly in promoting gender equality, media

freedom, countering cybercrimes, enhancing ICT security, promoting human rights, applying a multi-stakeholder approach to prevent and respond to violent extremism and radicalisation leading to terrorism, rehabilitating and reintegrating terrorist fighters and members of their families, anti-money laundering and counterterrorism financing, preventing trafficking in human beings, combating corruption, improving the business climate and attracting foreign investment, public accountability, and innovation.

6. We appreciate your support to inclusive economic development in Uzbekistan through enhancing digitalisation and gender equality and welcome the good cooperation between the PCUz and Uzbekistan's authorities.
7. We welcome the PCUz's support to Uzbekistan in improving and ensuring the inclusiveness of its legal framework to achieve the national SDGs and in promoting climate-conscious education. We also welcome the provision of international expertise for a mapping exercise focused on climate-related data, assisting Uzbekistan in addressing climate change challenges to meet its commitments under the Paris Agreement and Nationally Determined Contributions, and in its transition towards a greener and more sustainable economy.
8. We value the PCUz's focus on supporting Uzbekistan's ongoing reform process, especially regarding judicial reforms, capacity strengthening within judicial institutions, and implementing the Women, Peace and Security Agenda. Moreover, we express support for the PCUz's efforts to strengthen media freedom by promoting media literacy in line with international standards and OSCE principles and commitments.
9. We regret that the non-adoption of the OSCE Unified Budget since 2021 has negatively affected PCUz's capacity to implement its mandate efficiently, and urge all participating States to consider this in budget discussions.
10. The PCUz's work should remain balanced across all three dimensions and in line with the priorities set by the participating States, maintaining a focus on activities where the OSCE can have an impact. We underline the importance of the PCUz's presence with activities in all of Uzbekistan and encourage further engagement in this respect.

11. Uzbekistan is an important partner for the European Union. We look forward to the signature of the Enhanced Partnership and Cooperation Agreement with Uzbekistan in Spring 2025, as a new milestone in our partnership, elevating our bilateral ties to a new level. The EU continues to support Uzbekistan's reform efforts, and we place great importance on the security, stability and prosperity of Uzbekistan and the entire region. We reaffirm the EU Strategy on Central Asia, which focuses on promoting resilience, prosperity and regional cooperation in Central Asia. The implementation of this strategy provides a valuable opportunity for the EU and Central Asia to forge a strong and lasting partnership. The promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms, the rule of law, civil society, women's rights, sustainable development, and good governance, among others, remain at the core of our relations.
12. The EU welcomes Uzbekistan's review of its electoral legal framework to better align with OSCE/ODIHR's recommendations. We also welcome the deployment of an OSCE/ODIHR election observation mission for the parliamentary elections held on 27 October. The EU notes that the new mixed electoral system, introduced following the adoption of a new Constitution on 1 May 2023, has already enhanced women's participation in political life, as seen in these elections. However, the EU shares OSCE/ODIHR's assessment that the political environment remained constrained, not providing voters with a genuine choice. We also took note of the OSCE/ODIHR's finding of numerous cases of identified violations, malfeasance and procedural and technical problems on Election Day and disrespect of safeguards challenging the integrity of the process and undermining transparency. The EU remains committed to support Uzbekistan in its endeavour to carry out democratic reforms and, in particular, to fully implement the recommendations of this and previous OSCE/ODIHR Election Observation Missions.
13. In conclusion, the EU thanks Ambassador Karttunen and his dedicated team for their valuable work and wish them every success.

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

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