



EUROPEAN UNION

OSCE Permanent Council No. 1432 Vienna, 13 July 2023

EU Statement in response to the report of the Head of the OSCE Centre in Ashgabat, Ambassador John MacGregor

1. The European Union warmly welcomes the Head of the OSCE Centre in Ashgabat, Ambassador John MacGregor, to the Permanent Council and thanks him for his comprehensive report.
2. We appreciate the Centre's activities and achievements, especially in light of Russia's unprovoked, unjustified and illegal war of aggression against Ukraine, which endangers the collective security and stability in the entire OSCE area and has significant consequences for the societies and economies of Central Asian countries.
3. We take positive note of the good cooperation between the Centre and the host country. In this regard, we welcome the recent visit of OSCE Secretary General Schmid to Turkmenistan, where she jointly presided over the ceremonial inauguration of the Centre's new premises with Deputy Foreign Minister Vepa Hajiyev.
4. We appreciate Turkmenistan's active engagement with the Centre, which plays an important role in promoting and facilitating the implementation of all OSCE-related commitments by Turkmenistan. We also welcome the Centre's cooperation with the EU Delegation in Turkmenistan, and other international organisations in planning and implementing programmatic activities.
5. In the first dimension, we support the Centre's assistance in enhancing Turkmenistan's capacity to combat transnational threats, including the flow of illicit commodities, international organised cybercrime, terrorist use of the

internet, money laundering, and the financing of terrorism. In this regard, we welcome the organisation of the second national training on document security for the officers and teaching staff of the State Migration Service and the State Frontier Service of Turkmenistan, under the EU-funded Border Management Programme in Central Asia. We also commend the Centre's work in strengthening border service capacities and fostering trans-border cooperation, including through an ExB project supported by several EU Member States. We particularly appreciate the Centre's strong regional focus in this area, illustrated by the organisation of seven regional training workshops for border security officials from the five Central Asian countries.

6. In the second dimension, we encourage the Centre to continue its focus on improving good governance, including good environmental governance, which contributes to sustainable development and economic growth. We support continued work on preventing and combating corruption, enhancing energy security, and assisting the host country in aligning its legislation on anti-money laundering and countering-financing of terrorism with the Financial Action Task Force standards. Pursuing economic and trade connectivity is a valuable effort, and we commend the Centre for providing a platform for dialogue among government officials, together with the Office of the Co-ordinator of the OSCE Economic and Environmental Activities (CoEEA). We also commend the Centre's work on addressing climate change with the development of a regulation that provides a legal basis for supplying electricity generated from renewable energy sources to the national power system. In this regard, we appreciate the Centre's joint efforts with the CoEEA in supporting the Turkmenbashi port to successfully obtain the international EcoPorts certificate, which meets European port sector standards.
7. The improvement of the rule of law and respect for human rights are essential elements of the EU-Turkmenistan relationship. Despite some limited progress, the EU remains concerned about serious shortcomings in human rights and fundamental freedoms protection in Turkmenistan, and the lack of transparency and accountability in areas, such as detention conditions and the right to a fair and public process. We continue to urge enhanced work in the human

dimension, promoting and supporting the implementation of OSCE principles and commitments in the area of human rights and fundamental freedoms, as well as genuine civil society. In this context, we appreciate the Centre's engagement with national stakeholders.

8. We continue to consider work in the area of penitentiary reform, including with the view to ensuring international standards related to prisoners' rights, to be a priority. The EU emphasises the importance of Turkmenistan's ratification of the Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture and the International Convention for the Protection of all Persons from Enforced Disappearances as important steps towards eradication of these practices. While acknowledging some openness on the part of Turkmen authorities to share relevant information, we remain concerned by the continued enforced disappearance of many people in Turkmenistan's prisons. We recall that the *Prove They Are Alive!* campaign has documented 162 cases of such disappearances in the last 20 years, with nearly 100 of these cases still ongoing. We reiterate our call for immediate and decisive action by the national authorities to put an end to this heinous violation of human rights.
9. We welcome the Centre's activities in the area of media freedom and development and encourage continued close coordination with the RFoM, as evidenced by the visit of Teresa Ribeiro to Turkmenistan this week. We applaud the Centre's work in supporting the modernisation of media freedom-related provisions in national action plans, capacity building for journalists and assistance in the modernisation of journalism education. Additionally, we congratulate the Centre for organising a series of seminars in support of the implementation of the National Human Rights Action Plan for 2021-2025, which have raised awareness about the OSCE commitments in this field.
10. Turkmenistan is an important partner for the EU. The EU Strategy on Central Asia is a valuable roadmap for forging a strong and durable partnership between the EU and Central Asia. We remain committed to the universal UN principles of sovereignty and territorial integrity, as well as international security, fundamental freedoms and human rights.

11. In conclusion, we express our sincere appreciation for the Centre's work and wish Ambassador John MacGregor and his team every success in the fulfilment of their mandate.

The Candidate Countries NORTH MACEDONIA*, MONTENEGRO*, SERBIA*, ALBANIA*, the REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA, and BOSNIA and HERZEGOVINA*, and the EFTA countries ICELAND, LIECHTENSTEIN and NORWAY, members of the European Economic Area.

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