



## EUROPEAN UNION

### OSCE Permanent Council No 1155 Vienna, 20 July 2017

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#### **EU statement in response to H.E. Angelino Alfano, Italian Minister of Foreign Affairs**

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The European Union and its Member States warmly welcome the incoming OSCE Chairperson-in-Office, the Italian Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mr. Angelino Alfano, to the Permanent Council and thank him for outlining the priorities of the 2018 Italian OSCE Chairmanship.

Mr. Minister, you will assume the OSCE Chairmanship at a challenging and important time for European security. The violation of fundamental OSCE principles and sovereign borders, destabilising actions, growing threats to the enjoyment of fundamental freedoms and human rights, the shortage of military transparency, the scourge of terrorism and violent extremism and challenge of large migration and refugee flows confront the OSCE with a set of issues of the greatest concern – and a responsibility to act. The OSCE has shown it can rise to this challenge. It is incumbent on us to strive for making best use of the full potential of this organisation based on its concept of comprehensive security and the principles agreed in Helsinki, Paris and Astana.

The key to this remains restoring respect for the fundamental principles upon which the European security order and the OSCE are based and working together to fully implement all OSCE principles and commitments. Russia's illegal annexation of Crimea and Sevastopol, which we will not recognise, and its aggressive and destabilising actions in parts of eastern Ukraine, remains the most serious violations of our fundamental OSCE principles today.

We agree that the crisis in and around Ukraine will remain at the top of the agenda of the incoming Italian Chairmanship. We also support your focus on the resolution of the protracted conflicts in the Republic of Moldova and Georgia and of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. The peaceful resolution of these conflicts within the existing

negotiation formats remains a priority for the European Union. We welcome the overarching priorities of the Italian Chairmanship in this regard.

Full implementation, revitalisation, and modernisation of the existing politico-military toolbox, including the Vienna Document, remain a priority task for the Organization to ensure stability, transparency and predictability. We welcome the successful launch of the Structured Dialogue on the current and future challenges and risks in the OSCE area and remain committed to continuing deliberations.

Mr. Minister, the OSCE makes a valuable contribution in preventing and countering transnational and emerging threats. We look forward to continuing our joint work to focus on implementation and improve the OSCE's effectiveness in tackling these threats. You rightly emphasise the threat posed by violent extremism and radicalisation that leads to terrorism. It is indeed important to direct attention not only to countering terrorism but also to preventing it. This is in line with efforts undertaken at UN level and would usefully build on OSCE commitments and ongoing activities. We fully support the OSCE's comprehensive approach in tackling this challenge. We stress that respecting human rights contributes to the effectiveness of our efforts to prevent and counter terrorism. We would also welcome a continued focus on cyber and ICT related security issues.

We welcome that aspects of good governance, connectivity and energy efficiency for a green and low carbon economy will feature on our work plan also in 2018 and thus ensure continuity of our work in the economic and environmental dimension with previous chairmanships. We look forward to exploring the chosen priorities, including innovation, human capital and business integrity, and their link to the OSCE's comprehensive approach to security. We are confident that we will also have the opportunity to discuss environmental aspects of security.

Migration and the various related challenges and opportunities remain a topic of high relevance for the OSCE region. We all agree that the OSCE has a role to play in the governance of large movements of migrants and refugees, complementing the work of other relevant international organisations. This global challenge must be addressed collectively and the OSCE can be a platform to this end.

As you pointed out, for the OSCE, human rights are an essential pillar in the promotion of peace and prosperity. The European Union is convinced that there cannot be lasting security and stability without respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. The OSCE is for us a key partner in the promotion and protection of human rights. Restrictions to, and violations of, human rights and fundamental freedoms that we continue to witness in parts of OSCE region, as well as the shrinking space for civil society, must be addressed as a matter of priority for the OSCE. The European Union has always been vocal in supporting the mandates and autonomy of ODIHR, the High Commissioner on National Minorities, and the Representative on Freedom of the Media since they play an indispensable role in the implementation of commitments across the OSCE area, including at all stages of the conflict cycle. We therefore welcome your intention to highlight the importance of supporting OSCE autonomous institutions. We also reiterate our firm support for OSCE field operations and are concerned by the current tendency towards downgrading field presences. We also like to underline the importance we attach to the work of civil society in all three dimensions of the OSCE.

Given continued concerning developments in the Middle East and North Africa, the OSCE's southern region and strengthened cooperation with Partner countries should remain a priority. We are looking forward to the OSCE Mediterranean Conference this October. We would like to use this opportunity to thank Ambassador Azzoni for ably chairing the Mediterranean Contact Group this year.

Halfway into the Austrian Chairmanship, it is important that we work together to generate the necessary momentum to pave the way for strong results at the Ministerial Council in Vienna, based on OSCE commitments and principles, in all three dimensions. This would reinforce much needed trust among participating States and strengthen the foundation of the Italian Chairmanship.

Mr. Minister, we look forward to working with you next year. You can count on the support of the European Union and we wish you and your team every success.

The Candidate Countries the FORMER YUGOSLAV REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA\*, MONTENEGRO\* and ALBANIA\*, the Country of the Stabilisation and Association Process and Potential Candidate

BOSNIA and HERZEGOVINA, and the EFTA countries ICELAND and NORWAY, members of the European Economic Area, as well as UKRAINE, the REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA, GEORGIA, ANDORRA, MONACO and SAN MARINO align themselves with this statement.

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