



EUROPEAN UNION

28th Meeting of the OSCE Ministerial Council 2-3 December 2021

EU Closing Statement

1. We express our deep gratitude to the Swedish Minister for Foreign Affairs Ann Linde and to the Swedish Chairpersonship for this well-organized Ministerial Council and for the positive outcomes we have collectively achieved. We would also like to express our heartfelt appreciation to Ambassador Ulrika Funered and her excellent team in Vienna for their tireless efforts throughout this very challenging year.
2. We welcome the adoption of the decision on climate change, the first time that the OSCE participating States commit to address climate-related security challenges. Given the intensifying consequences of climate change, this OSCE deliverable is highly relevant and timely. Climate change is a global challenge, which needs effective action to reduce its negative consequences, thereby enhancing prosperity, resilience and stability in the OSCE area.
3. The European Union has taken an ambitious and constructive approach throughout the year and in the run up to the Stockholm Ministerial Council, seeking to develop the OSCE and achieve progress across all three dimensions of security. The Stockholm Ministerial Council has been an excellent forum for high-level political discussions and dialogue to rebuild trust by bringing together Ministers of almost 50 participating States to exchange views in both plenary as well as bilateral meetings and side events on current cross-dimensional security issues. However, we cannot deny that we would have hoped for a more constructive and sincere engagement during the negotiations on the draft MC deliverables by all participating States.

4. It is highly regrettable that the downward trend continues and that, in most cases, only a very small number of participating States, in many cases only one, block consensus on important topics that would have enhanced our commitments and would have given the OSCE new means to address effectively cross-dimensional security challenges in the OSCE region. Let us be clear: when the common principles that we all have committed to are violated, we must work until respect for those principles is restored. In this vein, we regret that yet again we could not agree on a substantial political declaration.

5. We are particularly saddened by the fact that we are still not able to reconfirm some of our core principles, such as ensuring gender equality, across all three dimensions, and the full, equal and meaningful participation of women as well as the commitment to the implementation of the UNSCR 1325 regarding the Women, Peace and Security agenda into the OSCE activities. These principles are of fundamental value for the EU. We firmly believe that, without them, the OSCE cannot reach its full potential. In the same vein, we deeply regret that, despite the considerable efforts of the Chair, we were not able to adopt the decision on women's economic empowerment, a key factor for achieving gender equality and sustainable and inclusive economic development and the creation of peaceful, prosperous and democratic societies. We hope that our efforts will serve as an encouragement for all participating States to continue our work and dialogue on this important issue, as well as to redouble our efforts for implementing the existing OSCE commitments.

6. This year we mark the 10th anniversary of the Decision on elements of the Conflict Cycle, adopted at the Vilnius Ministerial Council. The EU appreciates the Chair's focus on strengthening the Conflict Cycle throughout the year, as conflict prevention and response to emerging crises lie at the very heart of OSCE activities. This anniversary underscores the responsibility we, as participating States, have to act towards the prevention and resolution of crises and conflicts within the OSCE area. It could have served as an excellent opportunity to further strengthen the OSCE Conflict Cycle toolbox, including by enhancing the commitment to the full, equal and meaningful participation of women as well as the effective inclusion of civil society throughout all phases of the Conflict Cycle. Regrettably, one participating State could not agree to this draft decision, nevertheless, we hope that this important work will continue under the incoming Chair.

7. The conflict in eastern Ukraine caused by Russia's continuous acts of aggression and its illegal annexation of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol, which we strongly condemn and will not recognize, continue to pose a severe challenge to European security. It demonstrates the dangerous consequences that follow when international law and the fundamental principles of the OSCE are violated. This is why we deeply regret that again this year, Russia did not engage in the discussions regarding the declaration on the "OSCE's efforts towards peace with respect to Ukraine". We reaffirm our unwavering support for Ukraine's sovereignty, independence, unity and territorial integrity within its internationally recognized borders. The EU supports the continued efforts within the Normandy format and the Trilateral Contact Group and calls on the Russian Federation to assume its responsibility as a party to the conflict and implement the Minsk agreements in full.

8. We reiterate our unequivocal support for the essential role of the Special Monitoring Mission and call for the full, safe and unhindered access of this Mission to the whole territory of Ukraine within its internationally recognized borders. The unprecedented restrictions to the freedom of movement of the SMM, which have worsened lately, are of serious concern to us. We are particularly worried about the lack of transparency in the areas close to the state border between Ukraine and Russia and would have liked to see enhanced OSCE monitoring and verification there, in line with the Minsk Protocol, especially since the Border Observation Mission was closed this year. We therefore regret that one participating State did not engage in the discussions on the decision regarding OSCE permanent monitoring and verification of the areas adjacent to the Ukraine-Russia state border, which is currently not under the control of the Ukrainian government.

9. We highly value the clear focus by the Swedish Chair on conflict resolution and recall our position that all existing conflicts should be resolved in a peaceful and negotiated manner within agreed formats. In this context, we welcome the Ministerial Statement on the negotiations on the Transdniestrian Settlement Process in the "5+2" format and reiterate our position in favour of a comprehensive, peaceful and sustainable settlement of this conflict, as well as regarding the need to remove or destruct the Russian munitions and armaments from Transdniestria and for the foreign military forces to withdraw from the territory of the Republic of Moldova. Moreover, the

EU continues to support the OSCE Minsk Group and its Co-Chairs in finding a negotiated and lasting settlement to the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict and stands ready to effectively contribute to this end. We regret that no statement was adopted on the conflict in Georgia. Nevertheless, we look forward to the next Geneva International Discussions meeting on 7-8 December.

10. During this Ministerial Council, many Ministers addressed the deteriorating situation in Belarus and the serious and ongoing violations and abuses of human rights and fundamental freedoms by the Belarusian authorities since the fraudulent Presidential election of 9 August 2020, as documented by the Moscow Mechanism rapporteur Wolfgang Benedek. In November this year, 35 OSCE participating States invoked the Vienna Mechanism. We regret that the reply provided by Belarus has been unsatisfactory and not credible, indicating that there is no real change in its position. We reiterate our call on the Belarusian authorities to stop the orchestrated repression and intimidation campaign, release all those arbitrarily detained, respect media freedom and civil society, and start an inclusive national dialogue that would lead to new, genuine presidential elections based on international standards, inviting OSCE/ODIHR observation as well as other international and domestic observers. We fully support the offer made by the previous and current OSCE Chairs to facilitate a national dialogue and urge Belarus to implement the Moscow Mechanism recommendations.

11. In yet another year marked by the pandemic, it is highly regrettable that the OSCE participating States were not able to reach consensus on a declaration on Covid-19. It would have been an important opportunity to underscore the need for solidarity, unity and international cooperation and call on the participating States to ensure that human rights and fundamental freedoms are respected and protected while combating the pandemic, by adequately addressing the consequences of COVID-19 in all three dimensions and its impact on the implementation of our joint OSCE commitments.

12. We regret that no consensus could be reached on the two draft decisions on transnational organised crime. We had hoped to build upon the momentum of the Tirana MC Declaration to underscore the value of a preventative approach targeting the root causes organised crime, and to encourage further work towards the development of inclusive and democratic institutions to fight organised crime.

Unfortunately, we saw no genuine will for compromise from two participating States. We commend the extensive efforts of the CiO and the UK Security Committee Chair and we hope that we will continue our work on organised crime issues next year.

13. The EU supported the two texts presented by the Chairpersonship on public-private partnerships against terrorism and on terrorist financing, which would have reinforced participating States' joint commitments to address the pressing challenge of terrorism and violent extremism across the OSCE area. Regrettably, despite extensive efforts to accommodate different views and priorities, we saw no genuine will for compromise by two participating States, preventing collective progress on counterterrorism.

14. We are disappointed that for another year there was no agreement on the decision on the normative aspects of SALW and SCA. This decision would have provided the necessary impetus to our ongoing work in this indisputably important area in which we invest considerable resources and the OSCE can continue to deliver tangible results. We also regret that consensus on the declaration marking the 25th anniversary of the Lisbon Framework for Arms Control and on the draft decision on enhancing the OSCE-wide military dialogue could not be reached due to the unconstructiveness of one participating State. It is vital to modernise the OSCE politico-military toolbox, most notably the Vienna Document, in order to increase military stability, transparency and predictability. We also regret that we could not reach consensus regarding the decision on full, equal and meaningful participation within the armed forces, especially with regard to women. Moreover, the existing Conventional Arms Control and CSBM commitments should be implemented in full by all participating States and we reiterate the need to work towards an environment conducive to reinvigorating these commitments. We highly value and actively support, the Structured Dialogue as a meaningful, transparent, inclusive, state-owned and state-driven process for in-depth exchanges on the current and future challenges and risks to security in the OSCE area.

15. We deeply regret that the participating States were not able to agree on any of the Human Dimension texts this year, relating to the Freedom of Expression in the digital age, Democracy and to Enhancing efforts to address intolerance and discrimination. These are important issues and deserve our close attention. We welcome that this year marked the launch by the Swedish Chairpersonship of the application "Human Dimension Commitments", facilitating easy access of our citizens,

civil society and human rights defenders to information about their rights in the OSCE human dimension.

16. At a time when we see the core functions of our organization being increasingly challenged, we regret that the decisions regarding the annual calendar of certain OSCE Meetings and the Unified Budget Cycle could not be adopted. We encourage all participating States, to build on this year's discussions and the overwhelming support of delegations for it, so that we can achieve positive results next year. It is also disheartening that the draft decision on Preventing and Combatting Human Trafficking also failed to gather the necessary consensus, due to the objection of one participating State for reasons unrelated to the content of the text.

17. The EU reiterates its firm support for the OSCE Secretary General, the autonomous institutions and the executive structures, including the field operations. We recall our deep appreciation for the work of ODIHR, the RFoM and the HCNM and our unwavering support for their mandates. We also look forward to our continued fruitful cooperation with the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly.

18. In closing, we thank the Swedish Chairpersonship for the principled leadership of this Organization through a challenging time. You have steered us through the pandemic and ensured, along with the structures of this organization, that our dialogue about security challenges in the OSCE region continued.

19. We also wish the incoming Polish Chair every success and we assure you of our full support. We are grateful to the Republic of North Macedonia for taking on the responsibility of the OSCE Chair in 2023 and to Finland, for assuming this responsibility in the anniversary year of 2025. We also appreciate the readiness expressed by Estonia to Chair the OSCE in 2024, and regret that consensus on its valuable candidature was blocked by two participating States. It is with a long-term horizon of incoming chairpersonships that this Organization will continue to seek ways to end existing conflicts and be ready to prevent and manage current and new challenges. The European Union will always continue to support our Organization and its efforts towards this goal.

I request that this statement be attached to the journal of today's meeting.

The Candidate Countries the REPUBLIC of NORTH MACEDONIA*, MONTENEGRO* and ALBANIA*, as well as UKRAINE and SAN MARINO align themselves with this statement.

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