



## EUROPEAN UNION

### **OSCE (Special) Permanent Council No.1505 Vienna, 23 January 2025**

#### **EU Statement in Response to the Opening Address by the Chairperson-in-Office, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Finland, H.E. Ms. Elina Valtonen**

1. The European Union warmly welcomes OSCE Chairperson-in-Office, Foreign Minister Valtonen, to Vienna. We also take this opportunity to warmly welcome the newly appointed Heads of the three autonomous institutions—ODIHR, RFoM, and HCNM—on the occasion of their first participation in the Permanent Council since taking office. We look forward to continuing our excellent cooperation.
2. Minister Valtonen, Finland's OSCE Chairpersonship coincides with the 50th anniversary of the Helsinki Final Act, the cornerstone of the OSCE's foundational principles. The EU welcomes your steadfast commitment to our shared principles and commitments enshrined in this document, which underpin the European security order. We commend Finland's stated determination to strengthening the OSCE amid profound challenges to European and global security. Effective multilateralism and a rules-based international order based on the UN Charter and the Helsinki Decalogue remain core pillars of the EU's external policy. You can count on our full support in leading efforts to uphold and restore respect for these principles as our collective responsibility.
3. Critically, one participating State, Russia, continues to demonstrate contempt for international law and OSCE values through repression at home, its war of aggression against Ukraine, and malign activities across the region. The EU strongly supports Finland's emphasis on resilience, which is particularly relevant in the current security environment. The focus

on respecting OSCE principles, addressing today's challenges, and preparing the Organisation for the future demonstrates a deep understanding of its role and potential.

4. The EU welcomes Finland's prioritisation of supporting Ukraine as a central pillar of its Chairpersonship, exemplified by your first visit in the region this year. Next month marks eleven years since Russia began its aggression against Ukraine with the illegal invasion and occupation of the Crimean peninsula, as well as three years since Russia, with Belarus' support, launched its full-scale invasion of a fellow participating State. We will continue to support Ukraine and its people in their rightful self-defence against Russia's ongoing unprovoked, unjustifiable and illegal war of aggression in order to achieve the just and lasting peace they deserve. We remain committed to supporting Ukraine's resilience and reconstruction in line with its self-determined European future. OSCE leadership, executive structures, and autonomous institutions must continue the Organisation's ongoing engagement and assistance in Ukraine, notably through the Support Programme for Ukraine (SPU) and ODIHR. The SPU's efforts align with our commitments to help Ukraine rebuild, recover, and reform, while advancing key priorities outlined in Ukraine's Peace Formula.
5. Furthermore, we welcome Finland's focus on ensuring accountability for violations of international law and OSCE principles and commitments, including through mechanisms such as the Moscow Mechanism, ODIHR's reports on violations of international humanitarian law and international human rights law in Ukraine, and other targeted OSCE initiatives.
6. Recognising the destabilising regional consequences of Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine, we trust that your Chairpersonship will continue to address its cross-dimensional and cross-regional impacts. We believe the OSCE should continue to support all affected countries, including the Republic of Moldova, by strengthening their resilience, and we welcome your recent visit to the country.
7. The EU strongly supports your intention to ensure that efforts to resolve existing conflicts and ease tensions remain the OSCE's top priority.

- Progress in this area will strengthen security across the OSCE region. The OSCE can and should play a key role in conflict and crisis situations by effectively utilising its comprehensive toolbox throughout the conflict cycle.
8. We agree that the OSCE's comprehensive security concept remain essential in helping participating States address and overcome a wide range of threats, extending beyond military risks, from climate change to hybrid activities. The EU looks forward to Finland's leadership in fostering dialogue, enhancing preparedness, and addressing cross-border challenges, including climate security, cybersecurity, and disinformation.
  9. We commend Finland's emphasis on inclusivity and societal resilience, ensuring that women, youth, persons with disabilities and civil society have a voice in OSCE processes. Respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, along with promoting and mainstreaming gender equality and youth across all dimensions is crucial to advancing the OSCE's concept of comprehensive security. We reiterate the vital role civil society organisations and human rights defenders play in ensuring accountability and sustaining vibrant democracies.
  10. We strongly support your intention to strengthen the Organisation's operational capacity and functionality. We extend our gratitude to the previous Maltese OSCE Chair for its tireless efforts and tangible achievements in ensuring the resilience of this Organisation. We welcome Switzerland as the 2026 Chair and a member of the OSCE Troika. We look forward to progress on the appointment of the 2027 Chair and express our full support for Cyprus' bid to lead the OSCE in that year.
  11. The EU reiterates its unwavering support for the work and mandates of the OSCE field missions, the OSCE Secretariat, and the autonomous institutions—ODIHR, RFoM, and HCNM. We emphasise that it is our shared responsibility to preserve their strong mandates, and guarantee their effective functioning and adequate budgets, as we note with concern the Organisation's deteriorating financial situation. We call on all participating States to uphold the commitments they have made and provide the OSCE with adequate resources, enabling it to function effectively across its three

dimensions and all its structures. We look forward to Finland's leadership in the adoption of a unified budget for 2025 that will adequately resource the entire Organisation. We will support the efforts of the Finnish Chairpersonship in this regard.

12. The challenges in the OSCE region extend beyond its borders, highlighting the importance of strengthening partnerships with our Mediterranean and Asian Partners.
13. The EU firmly believes that upholding and implementing international law and OSCE principles and commitments, along with meaningful dialogue, transparency, and cooperation, are the only ways to effectively address cross-dimensional challenges, resolve disputes, and achieve peace, security, and stability. Honest and genuine engagement from all participating States is essential to achieving this goal. We reiterate that fundamental principles such as sovereignty, territorial integrity, and the peaceful resolution of disputes are collective obligations that are neither negotiable nor subject to revision or re-interpretation.
14. In conclusion, Minister Valtonen, we are confident that you will lead the OSCE with determination and effectiveness. Rest assured of our full support and cooperation in reinforcing our Organisation and safeguarding its achievements, along with the collectively agreed principles and commitments on which it is built. We wish you and your dedicated team every success.

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

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