

**EUROPEAN UNION****OSCE Permanent Council Nr 944  
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**EU statement in response to the Deputy Minister for  
Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, H.E. Alexey  
Meshkov**

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The European Union and its Member States welcome H.E. Alexey Meshkov to the Permanent Council and thank him for his presentation on the main topics for the Russian G20 Presidency and on Russia's main priorities in the OSCE.

The EU values highly its close cooperation with the Russian Federation and is committed to developing this strategic partnership. Last December, Brussels hosted the EU-Russia Summit while, more recently, High Representative Ashton met with Foreign Minister Lavrov on 19 February in the latest meeting in the framework of our regular EU–Russian Federation Political Dialogue. Many of the issues you have touched on in your presentation, such as visa liberalisation, are raised regularly in our bilateral meetings and some are being addressed in the negotiations on a new agreement to replace the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement which has been in force since 1997.

We would like to thank Minister Meshkov for outlining the priorities of the Russian Federation during its G20 Presidency. We share your view that corruption is an obstacle to economic development. We also believe it can threaten security. For this reason we believe it is a pertinent issue not only for the G20 to address but also the OSCE. Strengthening the implementation of the UN Convention against Corruption, ensuring the independence of anti-corruption agencies, countering bribery involving foreign public officials, fighting money laundering and protecting those that expose corruption are important elements of the G20 Anti-Corruption Plan and the OSCE Declaration on Good Governance. We look forward to the leadership role that Russia will assume in the G20 on anti-corruption issues. In the same vein we would encourage Russia to engage constructively on these issues within the OSCE.

Turning now to the OSCE, all participating States have a shared vision, set out in the 2010 Astana Commemorative Declaration, of building a free, democratic, common

and indivisible Euro-Atlantic and Eurasian security community in the OSCE area, rooted in agreed principles, shared commitments and common goals.

The EU's priorities for the OSCE are well known and have been elaborated on several occasions, most recently at the Dublin Ministerial Council and in response to the Chairman-in-Office, Minister Kozhara, when he addressed the Permanent Council in January.

Like the Russian Federation, the EU believes that the Helsinki +40 process offers us a valuable opportunity to translate that vision into reality based on the OSCE concept of comprehensive security. We hope that this process will lead to a more effective and efficient OSCE, better able to fulfil its objectives and to meet the challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century and contributing to efforts to restore trust and confidence in the OSCE space. The EU is committed to a successful and forward looking outcome of Helsinki + 40 and we will engage constructively in this process.

We agree with the Russian Federation that in our efforts to advance Helsinki + 40, we should be open to new ideas from various sources. This could include partner and other countries, other international and regional organisations, as well as civil society, including academia and NGOs. But we should also seek input from within the organisation itself, from our autonomous institutions, our field missions and our executive structures, all of whom have extensive expertise and knowledge gained from their experiences of the OSCE's first 40 years that could be invaluable as we map out a future for the organisation beyond 2015 building on previous processes.

Achieving further tangible progress toward the resolution, within existing formats, of protracted conflicts in the OSCE region, is of course a top priority of the EU and we note the Russian Federation's commitment to continue efforts in this regard. Likewise we agree on the need for action in addressing transnational threats. In this regard we attach importance to working in close cooperation with other relevant international actors and to having a cross-dimensional perspective which accords full respect to implementing commitments in the human dimension. One area in which we would like to see early progress is the cyber security area and we look forward to fruitful and constructive cooperation with the Russian Federation in the Informal Working Group.

We value highly the commitments on arms control and confidence and security building measures that have been adopted by the OSCE in various documents. These documents remain valid and should be further progressed. In particular, it is to be hoped that the Russian Federation will soon be able to support the proposal by a large group of participating States, including all EU Member States, to lower the thresholds for prior notification of military activities. We would like to reiterate once again our readiness to actively and appropriately contribute to work in this area.

The EU has always attached a high priority to the human dimension. Human rights, democracy and the rule of law lie at the core of the EU's foreign and security policy and our priorities in this area are well known as indeed are those of the Russian Federation which you have outlined. We deeply regret the failure to adopt any decisions in the human dimension at the last two Ministerial Councils particularly at a time when it has been possible for progress to be made in other international organisations on issues such as safety of journalists and internet freedom which have proved intractable in an OSCE context. We reiterate that security can not be achieved without respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, including those of human rights defenders and LGBTI persons.

The Human Dimension is an essential component of the OSCE's concept of comprehensive security. The EU will continue to press for full implementation by all pS of our existing commitments in this area as well as the identification and adoption of new commitments to take account of new and emerging threats and challenges to the full enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms throughout the OSCE area. In this regard we express strong concern over recent developments limiting the activities of Russian civil society and negatively influencing the democratic rights and freedoms in this country.

In conclusion, the EU looks forward to building on our strategic partnership with the Russian Federation in the coming years, notably through the Helsinki +40 process within the OSCE and to identifying measures to further increase trust and confidence among partners. We thank Minister Meshkov for his visit and hope that our productive and constructive dialogue will continue.

candidates Albania and Bosnia and Herzegovina, as well as the Republic of Moldova align themselves with this statement.

\* Croatia, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.

+ Iceland continues to be a member of the EFTA and of the European Economic Area.