



EUROPEAN UNION

OSCE Permanent Council No 1101 Vienna, 26 May 2016

EU Statement in Response to the Report by the Head of the OSCE Centre in Ashgabat, H.E. Ambassador Ivo Petrov

The European Union and its Member States warmly welcome Ambassador Ivo Petrov to the Permanent Council and thank him for his comprehensive report.

The EU welcomes the enhanced interaction between the OSCE Centre in Ashgabat and the Government of Turkmenistan, and encourages further deepening of cooperation in all three dimensions.

The EU reiterates its commitment to support Turkmenistan in its democratic and socio-economic reform process, including through bilateral and regional cooperation programs and development cooperation, as well as giving new impetus to our political, trade and energy cooperation. We welcome Turkmenistan's active involvement in the High Level EU-Central Asia Security Dialogue, as part of the regional political dialogue

Turkmenistan and the EU continue to share a common aim to promote a stable, secure and prosperous region, particularly in the aftermath of the ISAF withdrawal from Afghanistan. We value Turkmenistan's role in achieving this aim, including through the OSCE.

In the Politico-Military Dimension, we therefore commend the focus of the Centre on activities in the area of border security and management, in particular on enhancing border patrol capabilities, counter-terrorism, aviation and travel document security, as well as on enhancing the cooperation between criminal justice systems of Turkmenistan and Afghanistan on fighting organized crime. We urge Turkmenistan to make use of the training facilities offered by the OSCE's Border Management Staff College in Dushanbe in this regard.

In the Second Dimension, we welcome the continuation of activities of the Centre in the area of good governance, with an emphasis on combating corruption, money laundering and terrorism financing. We commend that the Good Governance Resource Centre within the Ministry of Finance continued work with the Centre in developing activities in this area. We encourage Turkmenistan to persevere on the path of reforms, and to take further measures to strengthen good governance. Furthermore, we encourage the Centre to continue the activity in the area of energy security.

Within the Human Dimension, we support the activities of the Centre to promote the OSCE principles and commitments in the area of human rights, specifically in the area of rule of law and independence of justice, combating domestic violence, freedom of religion and belief. We welcome the Centre's continued activity in the area of penitentiary reform.

With regard to media, we welcome the work of the Centre to develop education for journalists, including on online journalism, as well as for staff members of TV news channels. We encourage the Centre to continue its activities with regard to promoting media freedom, media pluralism, editorial independence and protection of sources. The European Union remains worried by the continued restrictions on the freedom of expression and freedom of the media and urges the Turkmen authorities not to limit free access to information by their citizens. We welcome the recent adoption of the National Human Rights Action Plan, which contains, inter alia, also the task of putting in place a system of independent, effective and regular monitoring of places of detention without prior notice. We also welcome the intention to establish a national human rights ombudsman. In this context, we encourage Turkmenistan to continue to use the expertise of the Centre in law-drafting, as well as to consult international experts on the reform of the Constitution. We would like to take this opportunity also to once again thank Turkmenistan for presenting a voluntary report on gender issues at the Human Dimension Committee meeting on 19 April.

However, there is still a significant gap between the legislative framework and its practical implementation. The EU remains concerned about the shortcomings in human rights and fundamental freedoms in Turkmenistan, including the continued use of torture. The European Union will continue to request in our bilateral dialogue

information on the status and locations of prisoners who have disappeared in detention and to raise specific individual cases. The European Union is also concerned about the freedom of movement and encourages Turkmenistan to permit citizens to travel freely in and out of the country.

We welcome the participation of Deputy Foreign Minister Hajiyev and other Turkmen representatives at the Human Dimension Meeting in Warsaw last year and we welcome the commitment of Turkmenistan to participate this year as well, in order to continue to engage with civil society. In this context, we call on Turkmen authorities to facilitate the development of independent civil society organisations in the country.

Finally, Ambassador Petrov, we would like to thank you and your staff for the dedicated work throughout the years. We wish you every success in all your future undertakings.

The Candidate Countries the FORMER YUGOSLAV REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA*, MONTENEGRO*, SERBIA* and ALBANIA*, the Country of the Stabilisation and Association Process and Potential Candidate BOSNIA and HERZEGOVINA, and the EFTA country NORWAY, member of the European Economic Area, align themselves with this statement.

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