



EUROPEAN UNION

OSCE Permanent Council 1387 Vienna, 1 September 2022

EU Statement in response to the address by the Minister of Foreign Affairs of North Macedonia, Bujar Osmani

1. The European Union warmly welcomes the Minister of Foreign Affairs of North Macedonia, Bujar Osmani, to the Permanent Council. We thank you for presenting the priorities of North Macedonia's OSCE Chairmanship in 2023 and we appreciate your readiness to assume the responsibility of chairing the Organisation at these tumultuous times for European and global security and stability. As a candidate country, whose EU accession negotiations have started in July and which fully aligns with the EU Common Foreign and Security Policy, North Macedonia is very close to the EU. We look forward to working with you as OSCE Chair next year.
2. Over the past years, the role of the OSCE Chair-in-Office has become ever more challenging as our region experiences unprecedented attacks on the rules-based international order, which are undermining our security and effective multilateralism. Russia's unprovoked, unjustified and unjustifiable war of aggression against Ukraine, which we condemn in the strongest possible terms as a gross violation of international law, the UN Charter and OSCE principles and commitments, is the most critical threat to our common security. The European Union therefore welcomes North Macedonia's unequivocal condemnation of Russia's ongoing aggression against Ukraine as a testimony to its strong commitment to the values we share.
3. We agree with you that the prioritisation of Ukraine and its people at the top of the OSCE agenda in all three dimensions of security is of paramount importance. We strongly support all efforts by the OSCE leadership, executive structures and

autonomous institutions to preserve the Organisation's legacy as well as its continued engagement in and support to Ukraine on the ground.

4. By launching this unprovoked, full-scale attack on Ukraine with Belarus' complicity, Russia has flouted not only specific OSCE commitments, but also the core principles on which European security is built, enshrined in the Helsinki Final Act and the Paris Charter, namely: refraining from the threat or use of force; respecting the sovereignty and territorial integrity of States; observing the inviolability of internationally recognised borders; respecting the freedom of countries to decide their foreign policy and security arrangements. We remind Russia that these principles are in no circumstances negotiable nor subject to revision or re-interpretation. Their violation is the greatest obstacle to a common, indivisible security space in the OSCE region and for peace and stability. Russia must respect the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine within its internationally recognised borders, immediately and unconditionally cease its military actions and withdraw all its troops and equipment from the entire territory of Ukraine, including the illegally annexed Crimean peninsula. Belarus must stop enabling the Russian aggression and abide by its international obligations.
5. Apart from its brutal attack on Ukraine and its people, Russia's continued destabilising role in the Georgian regions of South Ossetia and Abkhazia, in the Transnistrian region of the Republic of Moldova as well as its support to the Lukashenka regime in Belarus, have also severely deteriorated the security situation in the OSCE area. The EU is very supportive of your intention to ensure that efforts to resolve existing conflicts, including in and around Nagorno-Karabakh, remain the OSCE's top priority.
6. Achieving progress in this field would contribute to strengthening overall security in the OSCE region and would bring real improvements to the conflict-affected populations. As a regional security organisation under the UN Charter with a multifaceted conflict cycle toolbox as outlined in Vilnius MC Decision 3/11, the OSCE has a unique role to play in conflict situations. We urge all participating States, in

particular Russia, to make use of the tools at hand and to cooperate with the OSCE institutions and field operations in good faith.

7. We agree with you that OSCE activities in the Women, Peace, and Security agenda must also be strengthened. It is imperative that women have full, equal, and meaningful participation in their country's armed and security forces and be included at all levels of decision-making processes in conflict resolution and peace processes, as well as in the security sector. We also welcome North Macedonia's intended focus on non-military security issues, in particular border security management, cybersecurity with an emphasis on countering disinformation and malicious cyber activities, counterterrorism and transnational organised crime.
8. The EU supports North Macedonia's focus on the climate change and security nexus and building upon the relevant 2021 Stockholm MC Decision on Climate Change. The economic and environmental devastation afflicted by Russia on Ukraine is appalling. It is crucial that the OSCE addresses and alleviates the devastating impact of this war on the environment and the economy in the whole of Ukraine, including by strengthening disaster risk management, supporting water resource management, food security and Ukraine's transition towards sustainable energy infrastructure.
9. Lasting security cannot be sustained without respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, democracy and the rule of law. External aggression and internal repression are regularly two sides of the same coin. Promoting and mainstreaming gender equality throughout all dimensions is also an important aspect of advancing the OSCE's concept of comprehensive security. We welcome the special attention that the CiO will pay to the youth and the promotion of media freedom, freedom of expression and safety of journalists. Civil society is essential for ensuring functioning and vibrant democracies, and we therefore remain firm on safeguarding the open and inclusive character of the OSCE in relation to civil society organisations. In light of Russia's war against Ukraine, the contribution of Human Rights Defenders and Civil Society Organisations is instrumental in ensuring accountability for the crimes committed, redress for the victims and preventing repetition of crimes.

10. We strongly welcome your intention to steadfastly support the OSCE's autonomous institutions: ODIHR, RFOM and HCNM. It is the responsibility of all of us to preserve the institutions and their strong mandates, and ensure their proper functioning. In the same vein, the EU will continue to work closely with North Macedonia to support and safeguard OSCE field operations' mandates.
11. The challenges we face go beyond the geographic scope of our Organisation. Concurring with your assessment, we underline the importance of a strengthened cooperation with our Mediterranean and Asian partners, which should remain a priority. We commend North Macedonia's successful chairing of the Mediterranean Contact Group this year and look forward to this year's Mediterranean Conference in Jordan.
12. Minister, the EU firmly believes that dialogue, transparency and cooperation are the only means to address common cross-dimensional challenges, overcome disputes and bring peace, security and stability. The OSCE remains an essential platform for meaningful dialogue on every aspect related to the comprehensive concept of security and we must ensure its proper functioning. We express our readiness to contribute constructively, make the most of its toolbox, as well as safeguard and reinforce its existing acquis in order to preserve its relevance. Any real discussion on our security and cooperation must build on and strengthen UN obligations and OSCE commitments– the true pillars of the European security architecture - and not lead to their erosion. This must be the basis of any dialogue in good faith.
13. Rebuilding trust requires restoring respect for the fundamental principles and commitments enshrined in our founding documents and international law. Let us close by emphasising that we look forward to your Chairmanship's active political leadership of the OSCE in this endeavour, and assure you of the EU's full support and cooperation to strengthen our Organisation, the jointly agreed principles and commitments that underpin it, as well as their bona fide implementation by all 57 participating States. We wish you every success.

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

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