



## EUROPEAN UNION

### **OSCE Permanent Council Nr 1017 Vienna, 18 September 2014**

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#### **EU Statement in Response to the Report by the Head of the OSCE Presence in Albania, Ambassador Florian Raunig**

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The European Union and its Member States warmly welcome the Head of the OSCE Presence in Albania and thank him for his comprehensive report.

The EU appreciates the work of the Presence in assisting Albania to meet its OSCE commitments and welcomes its focus on promoting democratisation, the rule of law and human rights, and consolidation of democratic institutions. These are areas where we also focus our assistance and monitoring efforts as they are key for Albania's process of integration in the European Union.

This year the Council of the European Union decided to grant Albania the status of a candidate country to EU accession, acknowledging progress made by the country in the rule of law area, particularly in the fight against organised crime and corruption.

As also acknowledged by the Head of the OSCE Presence in Albania's report, considerable further efforts are still needed to undertake sustained efforts in a number of key reform areas, notably the reform of the public administration and of the judiciary, the fight against corruption and organised crime, and the protection of fundamental rights, including anti-discrimination policies.

The European Union shares the assessment of the Head of the OSCE Presence that a sustainable political dialogue and compromise-based and constructive work in parliament remain important elements for a successful reform process. In this respect, the EU urges all parties to focus their energies on this process and resume political dialogue in a spirit of transparency and moderation and in a compromise-

based approach. It is crucial that a consolidated political dialogue between the government and the opposition accompanies the reform process.

Efforts need to continue to strengthen the de-politicisation, accountability and professional standards of public administration. Regarding prevention and fight against corruption, the government has strengthened the institutional and legislative framework and policy coordination and monitoring have improved. However, corruption is prevalent in many areas including the judiciary, and remains a particularly serious problem. Albania should intensify its efforts and implement its anti-corruption strategy and action plan.

The fight against organised crime shows a positive trend in a number of areas, with an intensification of law enforcement activities including on drug seizures and drug-related crimes, economic crime, including money laundering, and trafficking of human beings. The fight against organised crime and corruption, including among high level officials, needs to remain a top priority. The EU welcomes the assistance of the OSCE Presence to the Albanian authorities in these areas and encourages its continuation.

A thorough reform of the judiciary remains essential. We note that Albania took further steps towards the reform of the judiciary and that reforms need to be coherent, inclusive and result-oriented with the aim of strengthening the independence, accountability and professionalism of the judicial system. Greater effort will be needed in order to build an independent judiciary, which is able to effectively implement and uphold the rule of law.

In the field of human rights, the EU notes that while the overall legal framework is in place, its implementation still remains a challenge and some revisions are needed, including related to anti-discrimination and gender provisions.

Adoption of legislation in order to provide equal and non-discriminatory treatment of all persons belonging to minorities is crucial. Adopting comprehensive legislation would help to address legal gaps that have been identified and clarify state policies towards minorities. This would help to ensure equal access in practice to rights for

people from all minorities. The EU recalls the assessment of the High Commissioner on National Minorities made on the occasion of her visit to Tirana on the need for a common legal definition for all minorities and a legal and normative framework regarding the protection of persons belonging to minorities. Albania will need to undertake further efforts to improve the inclusion of Roma and Egyptians and to take concrete steps to strengthen legal certainty of property rights and resolve claims for the compensation or restitution of property.

We emphasise the value of regional co-operation, in particular between Albania and its neighbours, and strongly support Albania's constructive role in this regard.

The EU continues to attach high value to the activities of the Presence aimed at supporting the Albanian authorities in the promotion of good governance, in building administrative capacities and meeting international standards in elections, media freedom and anti-discrimination. We also commend the Presence for its work on gender mainstreaming.

The EU calls on the Presence to continue using fully the capacities of the OSCE institutions and closely co-ordinate its work with the relevant international partners, in particular the EU, in order to avoid duplications and optimize results, in line with Albania's EU integration aspirations.

We underline that for the Presence in Albania, and for all field operations, effective evaluation based on benchmarking and performance indicators is essential to ensure efficient use of resources and aids the development of best practices and the process of lesson learning. We welcome the account of activities undertaken in this reporting period. We would also be grateful if Ambassador Raunig could highlight what he would see as the key outcomes the mission has delivered.

As for all field operations, it is important that the Presence continues to review its programmes, resources, and operating model to identify and implement further streamlining, and to ensure it can continue to play an effective role in the years ahead. We would be grateful to hear from Ambassador Raunig what progress has been made on this during the reporting period

In concluding, we would like to thank Ambassador Raunig and his staff for their high-quality work and their excellent political and operational cooperation and wish them every success in their activities.

The Candidate Countries the FORMER YUGOSLAV REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA\*, MONTENEGRO\*, SERBIA\*, the Country of the Stabilisation and Association Process and Potential Candidate BOSNIA and HERZEGOVINA, and the EFTA countries LIECHTENSTEIN and NORWAY, members of the European Economic Area, as well as UKRAINE, the REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA, ARMENIA and SAN MARINO align themselves with this statement.

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