



EUROPEAN UNION

**OSCE Permanent Council N° 1197
Vienna, 11 October 2018**

**EU Statement in response to the Address by the President
of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly**

The European Union warmly welcomes the President of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly Mr. George Tsereteli. Last January we had the pleasure to listen to you here in your capacity as Acting President and now we wish to congratulate you for your election as President last July.

We appreciate your proactive leadership and we have paid attention to your visits in several participating states, advocating for the promotion of the values and objectives of the OSCE. Such visits contribute to creating better awareness of the work of the OSCE.

We value the cooperation between the participating states and the PA in which several representatives from EU MS hold positions. We appreciate the special contribution that members of parliaments can make to our shared goals by generating political will in support of the implementation of OSCE commitments.

The Berlin Declaration of last July and the resolutions there adopted indicate that our respective priorities are well aligned. In opening the Annual Session in Berlin you spoke of how parliamentarians can promote full adherence to OSCE principles such as territorial integrity of states, the peaceful settlement of disputes, respect for the inviolability of frontiers and respect for the rule of law and human rights, and you lamented that the state of implementation of such principles is not where it should be. And just a few days ago in Bishkek you observed that the challenges and the threats affecting the OSCE are increasing. We agree.

Russia's illegal annexation of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol, which we will not recognize, and the clear violation of Ukrainian sovereignty and territorial integrity by acts of aggression by the Russian armed forces since February 2014, remain the most serious violations of international law and our fundamental OSCE principles and commitments today. We call on the Russian Federation to reverse acts that contravene these principles. The conflict in and around Ukraine is rightly at the top of your priorities as it is of ours.

One of the resolutions adopted in Berlin last July remembers the 10th anniversary of the August 2008 war in Georgia, your country. After 10 years the conflict between Russia and Georgia is still unresolved. The European Union's commitment to a peaceful resolution of the conflict in Georgia remains as strong as ever. The EU reiterates its firm support to the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Georgia within its internationally recognized borders. The European Union remains committed to its engagement in the Geneva International Discussions and its presence on the ground through the European Union Monitoring Mission.

In your report, you also mention other protracted conflicts and the crucial role parliamentary diplomacy has to play to help conflict resolution throughout the OSCE area. In the context of the Transnistrian settlement process, we have recently witnessed some encouraging developments that must be followed up on. The Nagorno-Karabakh conflict needs an early political settlement in accordance with the principles and norms of international law. Restoring respect for international law, building resilience and adopting an integrative approach to conflict and crisis are among our European priorities.

At HDIM you indicated that the human dimension should always be our first priority. Again we agree and that is why we continue to be concerned about the deteriorating human rights situation in several countries of the OSCE region marked by increasing restrictions on civil society, crackdown on human rights and fundamental freedoms, growing pressure on human rights defenders, intimidation, attacks and violence against journalists and other

media actors as well as increasing intolerance in many parts of the OSCE region. These worrying trends represent serious challenges to our comprehensive security. The Berlin Declaration and the resolutions adopted are a clear indication of the priority that parliamentarians give to these challenges and of their willingness to tackle them proactively. And they represent areas of common engagement between the parliamentarians and participating states.

Elections are at the heart of our liberal democracies. We particularly appreciate the Parliamentary Assembly's contribution to election observation, which we believe strengthens international election observation efforts and contributes to ensuring that elections comply with OSCE commitments and international standards. We take this opportunity to reiterate our full support for ODIHR's election observation methodology and the independent, professional and impartial manner in which it is implemented by ODIHR in partnership with the Parliamentary Assembly. We would be interested in hearing more about your co-operation with ODIHR in monitoring elections.

In your address last January you mentioned the intention of setting up a working group to look at how to make debates more interesting for our members and for the public at large, it is a relevant topic and we would appreciate it if you could share some information with us of relevant developments.

As we look forward to the Milano Ministerial Council we will do well to keep in mind the recommendations adopted in the PA, including the latest at the Annual Session in Berlin last July. In concluding, your presence here underscores the importance of always deepening the cooperation between the participating states and the PA for the added value it provides to upholding the respect for the principles and commitments to which our countries signed up to as the best way to ensure the security of our region.

We wish you all the best in the continuation of your responsibilities at the head of the PA and we look forward to seeing you again at the PC.

Thank you.

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

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