



EUROPEAN UNION

24th Meeting of the OSCE Ministerial Council Vienna, 8 December 2017

EU Closing Statement

We express our deep gratitude to Minister Kurz and to the Austrian Chairmanship for the generous hospitality we have enjoyed not just during the Ministerial Council, but throughout the year. Minister Kurz, you should rightly be very proud of your excellent team for the tremendous work put into preparing and hosting this Ministerial Council, and for the Chairmanship's tireless efforts in taking us through difficult discussions, this week and during the whole of 2017.

In light of ongoing challenges the EU would have liked to join a strong message in a ministerial political declaration. We regret that this was not possible.

For a fourth year, the Ministerial Council has taken place against the bleak backdrop of the crisis in and around Ukraine. We had hoped and worked for agreement on a Ministerial Declaration on OSCE action addressing the crisis in and around Ukraine and we regret the renewed failure to get consensus language on the most serious security challenge Europe is facing. Russia's illegal annexation of Crimea and destabilisation of eastern Ukraine continues to violate the principles and commitments, as enshrined notably in the Helsinki Final Act and the Paris Charter, which constitute the basis of the European security order. We reiterate our strong condemnation of the illegal annexation of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol, which we will not recognise. We reaffirm our unwavering support for Ukrainian sovereignty, independence, unity and territorial integrity within its internationally recognised borders. The European Union will support the continued international diplomatic efforts within the Normandy format and the Trilateral Contact Group. Respect for our fundamental principles and commitments must be restored.

We reaffirm our strong support for the OSCE's role in the crisis in and around Ukraine, and to its essential and multifaceted contribution to facilitating the full implementation of

the Minsk agreements. We also reiterate our unequivocal support for the essential role of the SMM in advancing the full implementation of Minsk agreements and call for full, safe and unhindered access of the monitors throughout Ukraine. We call on all sides to work effectively to fully implement the Minsk agreements and to re-establish full Ukrainian control of its internationally recognised borders, so as to ensure a sustainable political solution in line with OSCE principles and commitments. We underline Russia's responsibility in this regard.

The resolution of the protracted conflicts in the Republic of Moldova, in Georgia and of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict remains a top priority for the European Union. We call again on all parties to show the political will necessary to make progress in resolving them in 2018. We reiterate our strong support for the Geneva International Discussions, the Transdniestrian Settlement Process and the mediation of the Co-Chairs of the Minsk Group. In this context we welcome today's Ministerial Declaration confirming the progress achieved towards reaching a settlement of the Transnistrian conflict. We welcome the joint statement by the Heads of Delegation of the OSCE Minsk Group Co-Chair countries. We regret that it was not possible to adopt a statement on the conflict in Georgia.

Instruments of military transparency reduce risks, increase predictability, and thus play an important role in fostering confidence and stability. We welcome that we could reach agreement on the MC Decision on SALW and SCA, which remains an important contribution of the Organization to the stability and security in the OSCE region. This decision provides fresh impetus on our work in an area in which the EU and its Member States invest heavily. We also emphasize the need to work towards an environment conducive to reinvigorating Conventional Arms Control and CSBMs, together with our commitment to full implementation of the existing commitments in the politico-military area. We remain strong supporters of the Vienna Document modernization and the continued operation of the Open Skies Treaty. We regret that we could not reach consensus on Declarations on Promoting Military Stability and Security and the 25th Anniversary of the FSC. We welcome the successful launch of the Structured Dialogue, value the work done in 2017 and, building on this work, we will continue to actively engage in this process.

In light of terrorist attacks and ongoing terrorist threat in the OSCE area and worldwide, we were ready to speak out again strongly against the continued threat posed by terrorism. Negotiations on the text were fruitful and reflected a good balance – hence we welcome the Chairmanship's statement. Building on previous commitments, we tried to

reflect the increasing concern to all of us, on how to address the threat posed by foreign terrorist fighters, as well as on how to counter terrorist narratives, particularly taking into account the youth perspective, while respecting freedom of opinion and expression. We had wanted to highlight again the important contribution of civil society — and the importance to respect human rights and fundamental freedoms to effectively prevent VERLT. It is regrettable that the text could not be adopted.

Our comprehensive security cannot exclude or marginalize half of our populations. Gender equality should be a core value for every participating State, and we deeply regret that we could not adopt a decision on strengthening the participation of women in the security sector, as this is an important issue to address to increase the operational effectiveness of the security sector. We saw this initiative as central to the work of our organisation and look forward to continuing efforts in this area with the Chairmanship. We are also particularly disappointed that we could not adopt a decision on preventing and combatting violence against women, which remains one of the most pervasive and persistent human rights violations across the OSCE area. We reiterate that the engagement of men is essential for its elimination.

The cross-dimensional Ministerial Decision on strengthening efforts to prevent trafficking in human beings represents an important deliverable of this year's Ministerial Council. We welcome that it calls for the adoption of a victim-centered and gender-sensitive approach, which fully respects human rights and fundamental freedoms, as well as for the promotion of dialogue and co-operation among all relevant stakeholders. We also welcome the agreement, building on previous commitments, to strengthen efforts to combat all forms of child trafficking and sexual exploitation of children.

We welcome the adoption of the Ministerial Decision on enhancing OSCE efforts to reduce the risk of conflict stemming from the use of information and communication technologies. The OSCE has played a pioneering role in adopting and implementing confidence building measures to address cyber security. Progress was made this year on the implementation front and this decision provides again a welcome push to continue to address the cyber challenges we all face in a cross-dimensional manner, while preserving the mandate of the Informal Working Group established pursuant to PC Decision 1309.

We reaffirm the importance we attach to our cooperation on economic and environmental issues as an important element of the OSCE's comprehensive approach to security. We welcome that we could adopt the Decision on the promotion of economic participation in the OSCE area. We consider good governance, social inclusion, the fight against corruption and tackling unemployment, youth unemployment in particular, as essential to ensure prosperous, stable and secure societies. Furthermore, greening our economies and fostering our environmental cooperation are of fundamental importance. In the context of global efforts to combat climate change, in particular after the adoption of the Paris Agreement, we deeply regret that we were not able to find consensus on a text dealing with this critical and urgent issue.

The signals sent from the parallel civil society conference, this year again, reminded us about the urgent need to address the ongoing increasing restrictions on civil society and the crackdown in human rights and fundamental freedoms in many parts of the OSCE region. We appreciate the contribution of civil society in the implementation of our OSCE commitments, and we support their broad participation in OSCE events. Our commitments are more relevant than ever and we call on all participating States to live up to them and reverse existing violations. Despite considerable engagement from many delegations, which led to notable substantive progress, we deeply regret that for the third year in a row we were not able to adopt any texts in the Third Dimension, even though they enjoyed the support of the vast majority of participating States. Freedom of the media and freedom of assembly are at the core of the comprehensive concept of security, and we regret that the positions of a few participating States prevented us from adopting texts on these key policy topics. We hope and expect that efforts in these priority areas will continue in the coming years. In the same vein, we will remain committed to combating all forms of intolerance and discrimination in a holistic manner. We must continue to work on strengthening respect for fundamental freedoms, raise human rights violations, advance the implementation of our commitments and support OSCE activities in this regard.

The European Union stresses its strong support for the OSCE autonomous institutions, the OSCE field missions and the Secretariat. We reiterate our deep appreciation for the work of ODIHR, the RFoM and the HCNM and our unwavering support for their strong and flexible mandates. Their ability to carry out these mandates must be preserved.

The Austrian Chairmanship had rightly emphasised the importance of incorporating the youth perspective in our work and promoting further participation of young people. We look forward to further discussions on this issue.

We also look forward to our continued fruitful cooperation with the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly.

The OSCE's southern region – the Mediterranean – remains a priority in 2018. We appreciate the Italian Chair's efforts throughout the year on common interests and risks that impact security in the Mediterranean region and the OSCE area as a whole. The OSCE Mediterranean Conference in Palermo this year confirmed the relevance of migration in the security context – not just as a challenge, but also as an opportunity.

We greatly appreciate Italy's readiness to assume the Chairmanship of the OSCE at this critical point in time. Minister Alfano, we look forward to working with you and your able team during your Chairmanship and we wish you every success. You can count on our full support. In this vein, we would like to see timely adoption of the budget for 2018 and the adoption of a decision on scales of contributions.

I request that this statement be attached to the journal of today's meeting.

The Candidate Countries the FORMER YUGOSLAV REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA*, MONTENEGRO* and ALBANIA*, the Country of the Stabilisation and Association Process and Potential Candidate BOSNIA and HERZEGOVINA, and the EFTA countries ICELAND and NORWAY, members of the European Economic Area, as well as UKRAINE, the REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA 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.