



EUROPEAN UNION

**OSCE Permanent Council No 1110
Vienna, 21 July 2016**

**EU Statement in response to the Head of the OSCE Office
in Yerevan, H.E. Ambassador Argos Avakov**

The European Union and its Member States warmly welcome Ambassador Avakov to the Permanent Council and we thank him for his first report in his role as Head of the OSCE's Office in Yerevan.

The EU is concerned by the attack on the Erebuni Police Office in the South of Yerevan on 17 July. The seizure of hostages by an armed group, and the death of one policeman and the injury of three others is a sad and regrettable incident. We hope this incident can be brought to a safe and quick conclusion, without further injury or loss of life. We send our condolences to the bereaved and our best wishes to the injured.

Mr. Chairperson, we support the work of the OSCE Office in all three dimensions and are pleased to note that the Office continues to enjoy good cooperation with the Government and with civil society.

We note the ongoing work to support the Government improve the electoral process. However, we regret that shortcomings identified by ODIHR in their 2012 and 2013 reports still persist. In its final report related to the 6 December referendum, ODIHR stressed that the conduct of the referendum reflected the absence of meaningful action over the previous three years to address prior OSCE/ODIHR recommendations to improve confidence and public trust in the electoral process. Therefore, in light of the parliamentary election scheduled for May 2017, we encourage the Government of Armenia to step up their work to address the issues raised by ODIHR and to seek assistance from the Office, the appropriate OSCE institutions and others in order to do this effectively.

We strongly support the work of the office in the Human Dimension and deem it important that the Office continues to support the Government to improve respect for human rights, fundamental freedoms and rule of law. We therefore continue to support work on reforming the judiciary and criminal justice system, and note the positive activities undertaken on publicising the role and functions of the Human rights Defenders. We also reiterate our support for the work of the Office on improving the understanding of Human Rights in the armed forces.

As we heard earlier this morning, working to strengthen participation of women is crucial and should not be limited to just the civil society arena, but also extend to political life and government. Processes that involve women at all levels are more likely to succeed and be sustainable. We therefore encourage the Office to seek opportunities to further develop tangible outcomes in this regard.

We also support the Office's work on good governance and the fight against corruption. In particular we welcome the Office's continued assistance to the Rapid Regulatory Guillotine Project.

Mr. Ambassador, we would welcome the opportunity to hear where you have faced specific challenges in delivering projects and how you have managed to use the lessons learned. We would also like to hear how the Office has gone about exchanging best practice with other field operations and any specific examples of cross dimensional co-operation. Effective evaluation is essential for all field operations in ensuring the efficient use of resources, and that activities remain result-oriented. We would be grateful if you could highlight some of the key impacts of the Mission's programmatic work in this period, and what is planned by way of evaluation during the next year.

In conclusion, we would like to thank Ambassador Avakov and his team for their work and wish them all the best for their future endeavours.

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 countries ICELAND and NORWAY, members of the European Economic Area, as well as UKRAINE 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.