



EUROPEAN UNION

OSCE Permanent Council N° 1209 Vienna, 13 December 2018

EU Statement in Response to the Address by the Special Representative of the OSCE Chairperson-in-Office on Combating Corruption, Paola Severino

The EU warmly welcomes Special Representative Paola Severino to the Permanent Council and thanks her for the presentation. Corruption affects all OSCE participating States, including EU Member States. We are convinced that efforts to prevent and combat this global phenomenon must be stepped up. In the OSCE, it is therefore one of our key priorities in the Economic and Environmental dimension. In this context we appreciate your contribution to raising awareness, encouraging international cooperation and sharing of best practices. The conference on "Developing anti-corruption strategies for the digital age: recent trends and best practices in the OSCE area" in November in Rome provided a good platform to this end.

Corruption represents a threat to security and does not occur in isolation. It is an enabler for other forms of economic crime including money laundering, as well as for organised crime and terrorism. Corruption is also a threat to democracy, good governance and fair competition. It undermines the rule of law and the fundamental values on which our societies are based, erodes trust and creates a climate in which crimes and impunity prosper. It is therefore critical to tackle corruption in a comprehensive way, with appropriate legislation and solid institutions which carry out their mandate without political interference.

In the EU we continuously work on further improving our rules and policies on combatting and preventing corruption. The EU is striving to ensure a common high standard of legislation, either specifically on corruption, or incorporating anti-corruption provisions in other sectoral legislation.

To give a recent example, the European Commission put forward a proposal for a directive to enhance the protection of whistle-blowers. Integrity and anti-corruption policies are also increasingly part of other EU policies such as legislation on anti-

money laundering and public procurement, on confiscation of criminal assets, or the disclosure of information by private sector entities. Anti-corruption policy also plays an important role in our internal economic governance and in trade negotiations. Another key development is the setting up of the European Public Prosecutor's Office, which will be competent to investigate and prosecute crimes affecting the EU budget.

We also attach great importance to the fight against corruption in our neighbourhood policy as well as in the EU accession process. The EU focuses on assisting these partner countries in effectively implementing their anti-corruption frameworks through operational cooperation and political dialogues incentivising them to provide a convincing track record in this area.

Rule of law and anti-corruption figure prominently in the 20 deliverables for 2020 which were endorsed by the Eastern Partnership Brussels Summit in 2017. This includes the establishment of sustainable structures to prevent and fight corruption, ensuring that legislation and institutional changes are implemented effectively, as well as strengthening transparency and fight against money laundering. In this context e-asset declaration systems are being prioritised as well as setting up offices for the recovery and management of assets.

In the area of enlargement policy in 2018 the EU has shown a renewed engagement for an unequivocal European perspective for the Western Balkans region, with the adoption of the Western Balkans Strategy and the related action plan. The Strategy calls for enhancing our support for judicial reform and efforts to fight corruption and organised crime, including capacity building for corruption prevention.

The EU supports anti-corruption efforts of the countries in the region at two levels: on one hand, backing the creation of a legal and institutional framework to prevent and fight against corruption; and on the other hand, assisting the proper implementation of the existing legal and institutional framework in order to deliver concrete results. In addition to national and local governments and institutions in charge of anti-corruption, EU support also addresses media, in particular investigative journalists, and civil society.

We would be very interested in your recommendations on how the OSCE can further improve its assistance to participating States in combatting corruption.

In conclusion, we look forward to continuing to work towards our common goal to prevent and combat corrupt practices in all forms and at all levels for the benefit of our societies and economies.

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 country ICELAND, member of the European Economic Area, as well as the REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA, ARMENIA, GEORGIA and SAN MARINO 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.