



EUROPEAN UNION

OSCE Permanent Council No. 1351 Vienna, 20 January 2022

EU Statement in response to the Address by the President of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, Ms Margareta Cederfelt

1. The European Union warmly welcomes back at the PC Ms Margareta Cederfelt, the President of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly. The established practice of addressing the PC helps strengthen the overall complementarity of our Organization.
2. Last December, at the Ministerial Council in Stockholm, you correctly underlined that it was taking place as tensions were building up across the OSCE region. Since then such tensions have unfortunately been mounting. The new Chairman in Office, Polish Minister of Foreign Affairs Zbigniew Rau, stated at last week's Special Permanent Council that the risk of war in the OSCE area seems to be now greater than at any time in the last 30 years.
3. Aggressive actions have taken place, and continue, despite our collective commitments. Armed conflict continues in the OSCE region, particularly in Ukraine, and unresolved conflicts endure in Georgia and the Republic of Moldova. The OSCE has the right formats and instruments in place to work for sustainable conflict solutions if the political will is there. OSCE efforts are also ongoing to foster a conducive environment for a high-level political dialogue between Armenia and Azerbaijan ultimately leading to a comprehensive peace agreement. Most recently, the ongoing massive military build-up of Russia at its borders with Ukraine, in the illegally annexed Crimea and in the Black Sea is deeply worrying. The EU urges Russia to deescalate tensions and ensure

transparency with regards to these activities on the basis of agreed OSCE instruments. Further efforts towards conflict resolution should be carried out, as the parliamentarians can contribute to strengthening political will aiming at achieving tangible progress. We welcome your call, expressed also in Stockholm, for the full, equal, and meaningful participation of women in the OSCE structures and activities and in all peace processes across the region.

4. Democracy, fundamental freedoms and the rule of law have come under unprecedented and severe attack in Belarus in the run-up to and since the 9 August 2020 fraudulent presidential elections. Together with like-minded partners, the EU has been vocal and united in calling on the Lukashenka regime to end its repressive practices and release and rehabilitate unconditionally the more than 900 political prisoners. We share your regret that the regime has not accepted the reiterated offers to facilitate a serious, credible and inclusive political process resulting in free and fair elections under the observation of OSCE/ODIHR. We also appreciate your attention to the instrumentalization of migrants for political purposes by the authorities in Belarus.
5. You stated that issues related to European security - and security guarantees - can be debated. We agree. And you stated that discussions must remain rooted in the principles of international law and the Helsinki Final Act. We also agree on this. The European Union is ready to engage in a constructive discussion on security in Europe based on international law, UN obligations and OSCE commitments. We believe that the OSCE is the most appropriate platform for a meaningful dialogue in good faith on every aspect related to comprehensive security. And we support the Polish Chair to swiftly initiate a substantial discussion with all participating States on all relevant aspects related to comprehensive security in the OSCE area.
6. As you indicated, the Covid-19 pandemic remains a critical threat to all OSCE pS but we deplore that the pandemic and ill-perceived security threats are too often used to justify legislation stifling independent media, civil society, and human rights defenders. Lasting security cannot be sustained without respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, democracy and the rule of law. In

this respect, the OSCE autonomous institutions – ODIHR, HCNM, and RFOM - have a key role to play. It is the responsibility of all of us to preserve them and their strong mandates, and ensure their proper functioning.

7. We welcome that the Parliamentary Assembly will continue to observe elections which is, as you rightly say, a valuable mission, for the promotion of democratization and respect for human rights across our region. We take this opportunity to express our full support for the ODIHR election observation methodology and the independent, impartial and professional manner in which it is implemented by the Parliamentary Assembly in partnership with ODIHR.
8. We follow with interest the events planned under the “OSCE Call for Action” initiative. We appreciate that parliamentarians contribute to the work of the OSCE by generating political interest in capitals and with international partners. We will follow with interest your planned visits to Moscow, Kyiv, and Washington, DC this spring, as well as the upcoming Winter Meeting and the Annual Session in Birmingham next July hopefully, as you say, fully in-person.

I thank you for your kind attention.

The Candidate Countries REPUBLIC of NORTH MACEDONIA*, MONTENEGRO*, and ALBANIA*, the EFTA countries ICELAND and LIECHTENSTEIN, members of the European Economic Area, as well as UKRAINE and ANDORRA align themselves with this statement.

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