



## **EUROPEAN UNION**

### **OSCE Permanent Council No. 1376 Vienna, 2 June 2022**

#### **EU Statement in Response to the Head of the OSCE Mission in Montenegro, Ambassador Dominique Waag**

1. The European Union warmly welcomes Ambassador Dominique Waag to the Permanent Council and thanks her for her comprehensive report. The EU highly values the work carried out by the OSCE Mission in Montenegro.
2. Against the backdrop of Russia's unprovoked and unjustified war of aggression against Ukraine, which we condemn in the strongest possible terms as a gross violation of international law, the UN Charter and OSCE principles and commitments, the role of OSCE and its field operations continue to be imperative in promoting and safeguarding security and stability across the OSCE area. Montenegro's unequivocal condemnation of Russia's aggression against Ukraine is testimony to its strong commitment to the European values we share. We strongly welcome Montenegro's full alignment with all EU CFSP declarations, statements and restrictive measures. We look forward to the continued implementation of these measures by Montenegro.
3. We welcome the continuation of the Mission's work in three priority areas: Democratization, Media, and Security Cooperation and Governance and assisting Montenegro in achieving its national strategic objectives, in line with OSCE commitments and with the Mission's 2020-2024 Strategic Plan.
4. We especially commend the mission's well-established partnerships with host authorities, civil society and the media to implement its programmes. We appreciate the Mission's gender-responsive approach, its support to the Montenegrin

institutions to mainstream gender equality and for the adoption of the National Strategy for Gender Equality 2021-2025.

5. We also welcome the Mission's support to foster youth co-operation and engagement and the Mission's close cooperation with the Regional Youth Co-operation Office (RYCO), which also recently approved its Strategy for 2022-2024.
6. We commend the Mission's long-standing cooperation with the Parliament and its continued support to the State Electoral Commission (SEC). We especially welcome the Mission's work in supporting democratic institutions in the use of online formats to ensure greater transparency and enhance citizen services. We encourage the host country to work closely with the Mission and make further progress in the field of electoral reform, including by taking into account the OSCE/ODIHR recommendations.
7. In the field of media, we especially welcome the Mission's efforts to address disinformation and hate speech and its cooperation with the Agency for Electronic Media to develop recommendations on the safe use of electronic media and the internet, and the development of a manual on fighting hate speech on social networks.
8. We share the concerns of the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media regarding past threats and attacks on journalists in the country and encourage the Montenegrin authorities to effectively address the safety of journalists and media actors.
9. In the field of security cooperation and governance, we welcome the assistance provided to Montenegrin institutions in developing a transparent and accountable security and public safety sector. We welcome the Mission's engagement in drafting the Police Development Strategy and Action Plan completed in 2021, and its work in strengthening police professionalisation.

10. We appreciate the Mission's cross-programmatic approach in supporting Montenegrin institutions in combatting trafficking in human beings, preventing and countering violent extremism and radicalisation that leads to terrorism as well as combating trafficking of small arms and light weapons (SALW). On SALW, we welcome the Mission's support to ensure the safety and security of state-owned stockpiles, prevent illegal possession of weapons, and its engagement in a public awareness campaign to encourage citizens to surrender their weapons. We also recall our support for the implementation of the Roadmap for a sustainable solution to the illegal possession, misuse, and trafficking of SALW in the Western Balkans by 2024.
11. Finally, we welcome the formation of a new government in Montenegro and hope that this will positively contribute to restoring the political and institutional trust the country needs. We also welcome the government's strategic priority to accelerate the country's path towards EU accession by strengthening the rule of law and implementing relevant reforms. The EU reaffirms its unequivocal support for the European perspective of the Western Balkans, as well as its commitment to the enlargement process, based upon credible reforms by partners, fair and rigorous conditionality and the principle of own merits.
12. In conclusion, we thank you, Ambassador Dominique Waag, for your dedicated work and wish you and your team every success in the coming year.

The Candidate Countries REPUBLIC of NORTH MACEDONIA\*, MONTENEGRO\* and ALBANIA\*, the Country of the Stabilisation and Association Process and Potential Candidate BOSNIA and HERZEGOVINA, and the EFTA countries ICELAND and LIECHTENSTEIN, members of the European Economic Area, as well as UKRAINE, the REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA and GEORGIA align themselves with this statement.

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