



## EUROPEAN UNION

### OSCE Permanent Council No. 1299 Vienna, 21 January 2021

#### **EU Statement in response to the President of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly**

The European Union warmly welcomes the President of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, Lord Bowness, for his first appearance before the Permanent Council in his new capacity. We thank you for your endeavour to ensure that the Parliamentary Assembly is able to continue its work in this critical time and allow a smooth transition in view of the elections of the new President of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly at its Annual Session in July. We would also like to thank outgoing President Tsereteli for his unstinting dedication and leadership. We also wish Mr. Montella a successful second five-year term as the OSCE PA Secretary General and welcome his efforts aiming at increasing an efficient, transparent and accountable management, as well as his commitment to make the “Parliamentary Assembly a more politically lively and dynamic body”.

The current pandemic makes the role of the OSCE PA to foster dialogue in our region and promote our common principles and commitments even more important. Therefore, we welcome the “OSCE Call for Action” initiative, launched on the 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Charter of Paris and signed by former Chairpersons-in-Office, Presidents of the PA, Secretaries General and Heads of Autonomous Institutions. While carefully considering the recommendations, we appreciate the appeal to provide both the Organization with stronger political support and its executive structures, including the autonomous Institutions, with adequate resources. The EU continues to play its part by contributing to approximately 60% of the Unified Budget and budget of the SMM.

The EU welcomes the recent joint missions to Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan, carried out with ODIHR. We reiterate our strong support for the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly's election observations and ODIHR's methodology, as a gold standard that is internationally recognized. We welcome the independent, impartial and professional manner in which this methodology is implemented by the Parliamentary Assembly, in partnership with ODIHR.

Democracy, fundamental freedoms and the rule of law have come under unprecedented and severe attack in Belarus in the run-up to the 9 August 2020 elections and their aftermath. We appreciate that the offer extended last year by the incumbent and former CiOs to facilitate a genuine inclusive national dialogue between the authorities and the opposition in Belarus still stands. We also support OSCE PA efforts in this regard. We fully support such approach and promote it with all international actors. We call on the Belarus authorities to accept the offer and follow up on it in good faith.

The recent events in the United States have proven, once more, the need to defend democracy and its principles every day and demonstrated, in this respect, how resilient a society built on the rule of law, pluralism, separation of powers and freedom of media can be. The respect of election OSCE commitments, in line with international standards and obligations, is indeed a crucial element of long-term security and stability.

Across the world, democracy is facing challenges and threats on a scale we have not seen in decades. We need to step up our action to defend democracy and to this end Parliaments have a key role to play.

Conflict situations and protracted conflicts in our region pose a very serious threat to the security of the entire OSCE area. Their peaceful and lasting resolution is among the top priorities of the EU and we thank the OSCE PA for keeping them high on its agenda.

The EU reiterates its unwavering support to the sovereignty, territorial integrity, unity and independence of Ukraine within its internationally recognized borders, violated by acts of aggression by the Russian armed forces and Russia's illegal annexation of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol. The most significant achievement of 2020 was the agreement on the implementation of the additional measures to strengthen the ceasefire on 27 July. However, the European Union regrets that the ceasefire has so far not led to progress within the Trilateral Contact Group.

The EU values the cooperation between the Parliamentary Assembly and the OSCE autonomous Institutions for the promotion of comprehensive security in the OSCE region. The human dimension remains among our key priorities, as lasting security cannot be sustained without full respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, democracy, rule of law and the inclusion of civil society.

The OSCE's comprehensive and co-operative concept of security with emphasis on Conventional Arms Control, Confidence and Security Building Measures, disarmament and non-proliferation, constitutes an important element of our common security. We are deeply concerned about the last developments which are negatively affecting such security framework and urge all participating States to cooperate in order to revert this trend. Parliaments can play an important role to this end.

We also appreciate the efforts of the various PA special representatives and committees to address specific cross-cutting issues or geographical areas which can truly benefit from parliamentary attention. The EU also supports the endeavours to enhance parliamentary relations with our Mediterranean Partners, as we share the view that stronger ties among Parliaments from both sides of the Mediterranean Sea are necessary to address security in the OSCE area. We also appreciate the intention to exploit opportunities to similarly engage with the Asian Partners for Cooperation.

Today, in a time of pandemic, the need to promote multilateral solutions, besides national ones, to our common challenges is more urgent than ever. Against this background, the EU recognizes the role played by parliamentary diplomacy in strengthening international security and co-operation. We highly value, in particular, the concrete contribution that the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly and its members can offer to a deeper implementation of OSCE principles and commitments, as well as to the promotion and achievement of common goals.

Lord Bowness, we assure you of the EU's continued interest in effective cooperation between the parliamentary and the intergovernmental dimensions of the OSCE.

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

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