



EUROPEAN UNION

OSCE Permanent Council No. 1419 Vienna, 20 April 2023

EU Statement in Response to the Head of the OSCE Mission to Skopje, Ambassador Kilian Wahl

1. The European Union and its Member States warmly welcome Ambassador Wahl to the Permanent Council and thank him for his first annual report on the Mission's activities.
2. The Russian Federation's war of aggression against Ukraine has shaken the foundations of the European security order thus aggravating further the existing security challenges and threats across the OSCE region. Russia's war has negative political, security, economic, environmental and human rights consequences for the entire OSCE area and beyond.
3. Also in this view, we reaffirm our strong support for North Macedonia's Chairpersonship of the OSCE in 2023 and its efforts to ensure the implementation of the OSCE principles and commitments.
4. The EU highly values the work carried out by the OSCE Mission to Skopje as a trusted partner both for host country institutions and beneficiaries, as well as the international community.
5. In the Human Dimension, we fully support the Mission's continuous efforts to promote constructive inter-ethnic relations and social cohesion, including with

youth organisations. We encourage the Mission to continue its work with the local commissions for inter-community relations, including on integrated education. We appreciate the Mission's activities to foster parliamentary democracy, electoral reform, public administration reform, and promote the rule of law and strengthen judicial independence. In this regard, we take positive note of the recent signing of the police-prosecutor protocol, an important step in strengthening the criminal justice system, and commend the Mission's excellent trial monitoring as part of the EU-funded regional ExB project.

6. The EU commends the Mission's work on media policy with a special focus on freedom of the media and safety of journalists. We appreciate the Mission's pivotal role in establishing better understanding of the 2019 hate crime legislation and in establishing national networks against hate speech in the media and against hate crime. We also commend the Mission's work on gender equality, particularly its efforts to strengthen anti-discrimination legislation and combat gender-based violence.
7. In the Politico-Military Dimension, we highly appreciate the continuing support for the fight against corruption, organised crime, cybersecurity, financial and environmental crimes, domestic violence, trafficking in human beings, countering violent extremism and terrorism, and modernising the police, as well as strengthening regional cooperation for integrated border management, and supporting the host country on Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW).
8. We also encourage the Mission to continue its work on environmental issues, particularly in support of the OSCE project on climate change and security, and broadening environmental awareness in cooperation with the Aarhus Centre and other relevant stakeholders.
9. The EU reaffirms its commitment to enlargement, which remains a key policy of the European Union. We reiterate the EU's unequivocal support to the European

perspective of the Western Balkans, based upon credible reforms by partners, fair and rigorous conditionality and the principle of own merits. The EU fully supports the Western Balkans partners' reaffirmed commitment to inclusive regional cooperation and strengthening good neighbourly relations, including with EU Member States.

10. We are of the opinion that the EU accession process could provide numerous opportunities for the Mission to support reforms in areas of national priority that align with OSCE commitments.

11. Finally, we wish you, Ambassador Wahl, and your able team every success in the coming year.

The Candidate Countries MONTENEGRO*, SERBIA*, ALBANIA*, UKRAINE, the REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA, and BOSNIA and HERZEGOVINA*, the Potential Candidate Country GEORGIA, and the EFTA countries ICELAND and LIECHTENSTEIN, members of the European Economic Area, align themselves with this statement.

* Montenegro, Serbia, Albania and Bosnia and Herzegovina continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.