



EUROPEAN UNION

OSCE Permanent Council No. 1364 Vienna, 24 March 2022

EU Statement in response to the report of the ODIHR Director, Matteo Mecacci

1. The European Union warmly welcomes Director Matteo Mecacci back to the Permanent Council and thanks him for the detailed report. We thank you for your professionalism, integrity, and impartiality in fulfilling the mandate of this autonomous institution. Our appreciation goes also to the ODIHR staff for their dedicated service to this Organization and to the participating States.
2. We deeply regret that Director Mecacci's presentation today is taking place against the backdrop of President Putin's premeditated, unprovoked, unjustified and brutal aggression against Ukraine. We demand that Russia immediately and unconditionally cease its military actions, withdraw all its troops from the entire territory of Ukraine and fully respect Ukraine's independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity within its internationally recognised borders and territorial waters. The EU welcomes the binding order of the International Court of Justice, and its provisional measures, and demands its actual implementation by Russia. Russia must also stop its disinformation and misinformation campaigns and cyber-attacks. We also reiterate our call on Belarus to stop enabling the Russian aggression and to abide by its international obligations and OSCE commitments. The EU resolutely supports Ukraine's inherent right to self-defence, and the Ukrainian Armed Forces' efforts to defend Ukraine's territorial integrity and population in accordance with Article 51 of the UN Charter.

3. We express gratitude for ODIHR's prompt action to address the dire humanitarian and human rights situation caused by Russia's ongoing aggression against Ukraine. We highly appreciate that the *Ukraine Human Rights Monitoring Initiative*, through which ODIHR documents the most serious violations of human rights and humanitarian law standards, was operational from day one of Russia's illegal war of aggression. We also value ODIHR's role in providing technical assistance to the expert mission deployed under the Moscow Mechanism, invoked on 3 March by 45 participating States, including all EUMS – together with Ukraine. We look forward to it establishing the facts surrounding the violations of international humanitarian law and human rights law, as well as collecting information about the potential crimes committed, including against civilians. The report will be presented to accountability mechanisms that have, or may have in the future, jurisdiction.
4. Echoing ODIHR, we lament the impact of Russia's military attack on Ukraine's democratic institutions. We strongly condemn the kidnappings of democratically elected mayors and local representatives of Ukraine by the Russian Armed Forces and call for their immediate release and for their safety to be guaranteed.
5. We stand ready to support ODIHR's further efforts to undertake concrete actions with regard to Russia's war against Ukraine in the context of the OSCE's comprehensive approach to security.
6. We look forward to the first Human Dimension event of the year, the First Supplementary Human Dimension Meeting dedicated to *International co-operation to address violations of international humanitarian law and international human rights law*, organized by the CiO and ODIHR. It will be an opportunity to address the humanitarian and human rights consequences of the Russian war of aggression.
7. We underline the importance of ODIHR's role in securing a platform for civil society representatives and human rights defenders to interact with national authorities, ensuring their voices are heard. We will continue to call on all participating States to live up to their international human rights obligations and OSCE commitments, as well as to speak up against the shrinking space, intimidation and reprisals against civil society and human rights defenders. In

this regard, we note with deep concern that the Russian external aggression is accompanied by an ever-increasing repression of Russia's own citizens. We strongly condemn the unprecedented institutional and judicial crackdown on human rights and fundamental freedoms, and outright censorship in Russia.

8. Mr. Director,

In many ways, 2021 represented a milestone for ODIHR. ODIHR marked its 30th anniversary, its 400th election observation, as well as the publication of its 15th annual hate crime report, the largest database on hate crime in the world. ODIHR's work and its assistance to the participating States, as well as to the OSCE field missions, remained vital despite the COVID-19 pandemic limitations. ODIHR is today the principal institution for ensuring support for free and fair elections, having deployed over 400 election observation missions across the OSCE region. We take this opportunity to express our full support for the election monitoring carried out by the OSCE/ODIHR and its recommendations. We welcome the Office's continued efforts to support the human rights defenders, as well as the continuing work on torture prevention and freedom of peaceful assembly and association. We value the expert guidance that ODIHR has continued to offer to the participating States on ensuring the rule of law and the independence of the judiciary, respecting human rights and fundamental freedoms, strengthening democratic institutions, increasing the political participation of women, as well as on ensuring inclusive and diverse societies by promoting tolerance and combating all forms of discrimination, including by preventing and combating hate crimes, promoting gender equality and combating gender-based violence.

9. We highly value the independent expert guidance that ODIHR has been providing us with throughout the past 30 years, and we look forward to working closely with the Office in the future. We fully support the mandate of this autonomous institution, which is exercised in a transparent and impartial manner. We urge all participating States to further strengthen their engagement with ODIHR in implementing our human rights commitments, a core component of the OSCE's comprehensive concept of security. We wish you every success for the future.

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, LIECHTENSTEIN and NORWAY, members of the European Economic Area, as well as UKRAINE, GEORGIA, ANDORRA, MONACO, 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.