



EUROPEAN UNION

OSCE Permanent Council No. 1367 Vienna, 7 April 2022

EU Statement in Response to the Head of the OSCE Mission to Skopje, Ambassador Clemens Koja

1. The European Union and its Member States warmly welcome Ambassador Koja back to the Permanent Council and thank him for his annual report on the Mission's activities. The EU highly values the work carried out by the OSCE Mission in Skopje.
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. North Macedonia's unequivocal condemnation of Russia's aggression against Ukraine is testimony to its strong commitment to the European values we share. We welcome North Macedonia's historic step to fully align with all EU CFSP declarations, statements and restrictive measures.
3. The EU and its Member States highly value the work carried out by the Mission, including its support for the implementation of the Ohrid Framework Agreement.
4. We welcome the priorities set for the Mission's work in its new three year programmatic strategy 2022-24, namely supporting the government's reform agenda in key areas including rule of law, democratic governance, inter-ethnic relations, social cohesion, police reform and combatting transnational threats.

5. We commend the Mission for its timely build-up of connections with new political representatives at local and central level following the October 2021 local elections and the appointment of a new government in January 2022.
6. As far as the Politico-Military Dimension is concerned, we highly appreciate the intention to continue to support the host country's police reform efforts. Also of high relevance to the EU is fighting corruption, as well as organised crime, in particular financial crimes, trafficking in human beings and small arms, and countering violent extremism, also by strengthening regional cooperation and operational capacities for integrated border management.
7. We also encourage the Mission to continue its work on environmental issues. We would be interested to learn more about your support for the OSCE project on climate change and security and your cooperation with the Aarhus Centre. We believe that the Mission could use OSCE's expertise and networks to cooperate with relevant stakeholders with the aim of broadening environmental awareness.
8. With regard to the Human Dimension, we fully support the Mission's continuous efforts to pro-actively promote constructive inter-ethnic relations and social cohesion, in particular by supporting the country's 'Strategy on the One Society Concept and Inter-culturalism', including the work of the local Commissions for Inter-Community Relations and the work on integrated education. We encourage the Mission to continue its work with youth organisations.
9. We appreciate the Mission's intention to continue its activities to foster parliamentary democracy, electoral reform, public administration reform and the decentralisation process. We also encourage the Mission to continue promoting the rule of law, including through legislative reform and strengthening judicial independence, in particular through trial monitoring and capacity building of the judiciary and the public prosecution.
10. We share your belief that it is important for the Mission to continue its work on media policy, with particular focus on the important issues of freedom of the media, safety of journalists and addressing media polarisation.

11. We commend the Mission's progress in mainstreaming a gender perspective into its work and fully support its efforts to strengthen anti-discrimination legislation, including the new Gender Equality Law. We welcome the Mission's aim to enhance its work on combating gender-based violence and hate crime.
12. We reaffirm our support to North Macedonia as part of the OSCE Troika, in view of its 2023 Chairmanship of the OSCE.
13. 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 Western Balkans partners' reaffirmed commitment to inclusive regional cooperation and strengthening good neighbourly relations, including with EU Member States.
14. Finally, we wish you Ambassador Koja and your able team every success in the coming year.

The Candidate Countries TURKEY, MONTENEGRO*, 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.

* Montenegro and Albania continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.