



EUROPEAN UNION

OSCE Special Permanent Council 1404 Vienna, 12 January 2023

EU Statement in response to the address by the Minister of Foreign Affairs of North Macedonia, H.E. Mr. Bujar Osmani

1. The European Union warmly congratulates North Macedonia on the assumption of the 2023 OSCE Chairpersonship and welcomes our new CiO, Foreign Minister Osmani here in Vienna. Minister Osmani, we thank you for the presentation of North Macedonia's programme. In these critical times for European and global security and stability, your task will be a difficult one. Be assured of our support of your principle-based leadership.
2. We agree with your continued prioritisation of Ukraine and its people on the OSCE agenda – an approach rightly followed by the outgoing Polish CiO. We will continue to support Ukraine to defend its independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity within its internationally recognised borders for as long as it takes. Equally, we remain determined to support Ukraine's resilience and reconstruction. We strongly support all efforts by the OSCE leadership, executive structures and autonomous institutions to preserve the Organisation's continued engagement in and support to Ukraine on the ground, including through the Support Programme for Ukraine. We also believe that the OSCE should provide a solid support for the countries most affected by Russia's war against Ukraine, such as the Republic of Moldova, in order to strengthen their resilience.
3. Minister Osmani, Russia's ongoing unprovoked, unjustified and unjustifiable war of aggression against Ukraine, with Belarus' complicity, represents the gravest threat to European security since World War II. Pursuing its imperialistic ambitions and in gross violation of international law, the UN Charter, as well as OSCE principles and commitments, Russia has invaded a peaceful and sovereign neighbouring State,

Ukraine. Russia has razed Ukrainian towns to the ground, has attempted to illegally annex Ukraine's territories, has killed and wounded thousands of civilians, has forcefully deported to Russia many Ukrainians, including children, and has created waves of displaced persons within and outside Ukraine. Russia has also been targeting hospitals, schools and cultural sites, as well as critical infrastructure such as energy and water supply, with the purpose of causing human suffering and breaking the resolve of Ukrainian people. Furthermore, it has also attempted to blackmail the world through food and energy shortages, and irresponsible nuclear rhetoric and activities.

4. Russia bears full responsibility for its war of aggression and those in charge will ultimately be held accountable for all their despicable acts against Ukraine and the Ukrainian people. We fully support all measures, also within the OSCE, to ensure there is no impunity for war crimes or other international crimes, including ways to secure accountability for the crime of aggression. Russia must immediately and unconditionally cease its military actions and withdraw all its troops and equipment from the entire territory of Ukraine within its internationally recognised borders. The Belarusian authorities must refrain from any further involvement in or facilitation of Russia's illegal war of aggression against Ukraine.
5. Acutely aware of the destabilising regional consequences of Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine, we trust that intensified engagement on the cross-dimensional and cross-regional impact of the war will continue under your Chairpersonship. The EU reiterates its unwavering support for, and commitment to, the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Republic of Moldova and Georgia within their internationally recognised borders. The EU remains fully committed to facilitate efforts to secure sustainable peace and stability in the whole South Caucasus. We also underscore the importance of maintaining security and stability in the Western Balkans and in Central Asia.
6. The EU is very supportive of your intention to ensure that efforts to resolve existing conflicts remain the OSCE's top priority and we welcome your human-centred approach in this regard. Achieving progress in this field would contribute to strengthening overall security in the OSCE area. The OSCE has a unique role to play

in conflict and crisis situations, including through its Conflict Cycle toolbox. However, political will is indispensable in this regard. We urge all participating States to make use of the tools at hand and to cooperate with the OSCE institutions and field operations in good faith. The EU will continue to actively support the resolution of existing conflicts in a peaceful, comprehensive and sustainable manner.

7. Promoting and mainstreaming gender equality throughout all dimensions is also an important aspect of advancing the OSCE's concept of comprehensive security. We agree with you that OSCE activities in the Women, Peace, and Security agenda must also be strengthened. It is imperative that women's participation at all levels of decision-making processes is full, equal, and meaningful, including in the armed and security forces. The EU fully supports your intention to appoint a Special Representative on the WPS agenda.
8. We also welcome North Macedonia's intended focus on non-military security issues, in particular border security management, cybersecurity with an emphasis on countering disinformation and malicious cyber activities, counterterrorism and combating transnational organised crime.
9. The EU supports North Macedonia's focus on the climate change and security nexus and building upon the relevant 2021 Stockholm MC Decision on Climate Change, as well as on combating corruption and promoting good governance. The economic and environmental devastation inflicted by Russia on Ukraine is appalling. It is crucial that the OSCE addresses and alleviates the devastating impact of this war on human security, the environment, including biodiversity, and the economy in the whole of Ukraine and beyond, including by addressing water, food and energy security.
10. As you eloquently articulated, respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, democracy and the rule of law are prerequisites for comprehensive security. We have seen how Russia's external aggression, supported by Belarus, is mirrored by a systematic and drastic internal repression. On the same token, we welcome your special attention to the promotion of freedom of expression, media freedom and safety of journalists. We value the importance you attach to the role youth should play in our societies. We underline the crucial role civil society organisations and human rights defenders play in ensuring accountability and the functioning and development

of vibrant democracies. The EU remains firm in safeguarding the open and inclusive character of the OSCE for civil society organisations and the annual OSCE human dimension events. We applaud your decision to appoint a CiO Special Representative on Civil Society.

11. In the face of the dramatic degradation of security in the OSCE area, we strongly welcome your intention to steadfastly support the OSCE's autonomous institutions – ODIHR, HCNM and RFoM –, executive structures and field operations. It is the responsibility of us all to preserve their strong mandates, ensure their proper functioning and adequate budgets. We value their important work in assisting participating States to implement our OSCE commitments, including their efforts aimed at addressing the consequences of Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine. In the same vein, the EU will continue to work closely with North Macedonia to support and safeguard OSCE field operations' mandates. The EU also remains convinced of the importance of effective co-operation with our Mediterranean and Asian Partners for Co-operation in tackling global challenges.
12. Minister Osmani, the EU firmly believes that defending OSCE principles and commitments, as well as meaningful dialogue, transparency and cooperation, are the only means to effectively address common cross-dimensional challenges, overcome disputes and bring peace, security and stability. We fully concur with you that rebuilding trust requires restoring respect for the fundamental principles and commitments enshrined in our founding documents and international law. The use of force and coercion to change borders has no place in the 21st century. Relations among sovereign States must continue to be guided by the UN Charter, international law and its principles, including those enshrined in the Helsinki Final Act and the Paris Charter. We remind Russia and Belarus that these principles are the basis of our peaceful coexistence and they are neither negotiable nor subject to revision or re-interpretation.
13. Let us conclude by emphasising that we look forward to your Chairpersonship's political leadership of the OSCE in this endeavour, and assure you of the EU's full support and cooperation to strengthen our Organisation, the jointly agreed principles

and commitments that underpin it, as well as their bona fide implementation by all 57 participating States. We wish you and your dedicated team every success.

The Candidate Countries MONTENEGRO*, 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, as well as ANDORRA, MONACO and SAN MARINO align themselves with this statement.

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