



## **EUROPEAN UNION**

### **OSCE Permanent Council No.1484 Vienna, 25 July 2024**

#### **EU Statement on the Report by the Head of the OSCE Programme Office in Astana, Dr. Volker Frobarth**

1. The European Union warmly welcomes the Head of the OSCE Programme Office in Astana, Dr. Volker Frobarth, back to the Permanent Council, and thanks him for his comprehensive and highly informative report.
2. We welcome the Office's important programmatic activities across all three dimensions, designed to contribute to Kazakhstan's development objectives and implemented on the basis of excellent cooperation with the host institutions. We also value the Office's regional engagement, as well as its longstanding cooperation with local partners, including civil society, media, academia, and the private sector. We equally appreciate that programmatic activities often incorporate a gender perspective and prioritise engaging youth. We highly value the Office's close cooperation with the EU Delegation in Astana and EU Member States on the ground.
3. We appreciate the Office's achievements, especially against the backdrop of Russia's unprovoked, unjustifiable and illegal war of aggression against Ukraine, which has also had significant negative consequences for the societies and economies of the Central Asian countries. Since the last report by Dr. Frobarth, two OSCE Chairpersons-in-Office, North Macedonia's Foreign Minister Osmani and Malta's Foreign Minister Borg, have visited Kazakhstan. Their visits are testimony to the constructive, long-standing cooperation between the OSCE and Kazakhstan.
4. Cooperation between Kazakhstan and the European Union too has increased over the last few decades, and continues to be strengthened in various sectors. Sustainable economic growth with a particular focus on

women and youth-led micro-, small and medium-sized enterprises, and the rule of law are priority areas for cooperation under the Cooperation Facility the EU has allocated to Kazakhstan. Our strong support for the sector of transport connectivity was highlighted by the launch of the Trans-Caspian Transport Corridor Coordination Platform in Astana on 12<sup>th</sup> June. We remain committed to further strengthening our partnership with Kazakhstan on the basis of the universal principles of sovereignty and territorial integrity, in line with the UN Charter and its principles, as well as international security, fundamental freedoms and human rights.

5. We support the reforms initiated by president Tokayev within the ‘New Kazakhstan’ framework and the concept of the “Listening State”. The rule of law, and the promotion and protection of human rights, remain essential pillars of the EU’s action both internally and externally. We encourage Kazakhstan to continue on its path towards a more open, democratic and inclusive society. While we acknowledge the government’s focus on economic reforms, it is important to ensure that political reforms advance in parallel.
6. In the Politico-Military Dimension, the EU welcomes the strong cooperation between the Office and Kazakhstan in the field of border security and management, and in countering trans-national threats, cybercrime and radicalization of youth. We also appreciate the long-standing work on supporting Kazakhstan’s efforts in the sphere of confidence-and security-building measures, including through activities related to the Vienna Document 2011, as well as the Office’s comprehensive activities across the Women, Peace and Security Agenda. We would also like to highlight the good cooperation between the Office and the Kazakhstan Peace Operations Centre of the Ministry of Defense of Kazakhstan.
7. In the Economic and Environmental Dimension, we appreciate the continued work on combating corruption, money laundering, terrorism-financing, strengthening Kazakhstan’s connectivity capabilities and the development of small-and medium-sized enterprises. The Office’s activities

in developing sustainable responses to the challenges in water management via the promotion of responsible water management principles and transboundary cooperation deserve particular mention.

8. In the Human Dimension, we commend the work of the Office in strengthening national human rights institutions and promoting media freedom. We appreciate the fact that the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media has been consulted on the new Law on Media ahead of its adoption. Nevertheless, we regret that the final shape of this Law, signed on 19 June, strengthens state regulation on the media and broadens the legal basis for monitoring media content. We call on Kazakhstan to continue working closely with the OSCE and its autonomous institutions to uphold freedom of expression in line with its international obligations and commitments.
9. The fight against gender-based violence remains a considerable challenge, and we therefore welcome the recently adopted Law on Domestic violence. This is a major achievement and a good example of constructive cooperation between the Kazakh authorities and civil society. We encourage Kazakhstan to build on this success and seek progress in other important areas, including ensuring gender equality, the protection of persons in vulnerable situations, and tackling discrimination. In this context, we express concern over the Petition "We are against open and hidden LGBT propaganda in Kazakhstan!" that is currently being considered by the authorities.
10. In conclusion, we thank Dr. Frobarth and his team for their work and wish them every success in the fulfilment of their mandate.

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

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