



EUROPEAN UNION

OSCE Permanent Council No 1108 Vienna, 14 July 2016

EU Statement in response to H.E. Sebastian Kurz, Austrian Federal Minister for Europe, Integration and Foreign Affairs

The European Union and its Member States warmly welcome the incoming OSCE Chairperson-in-Office, The Austrian Federal Minister for Europe, Integration and Foreign Affairs, Mr. Sebastian Kurz, to the Permanent Council and thank him for outlining the priorities of the 2017 Austrian OSCE Chairmanship.

Mr. Minister, you will assume the OSCE Chairmanship at a time in which the Organization has perhaps never been more challenged and more important at the same time. The violation of fundamental OSCE principles and sovereign borders, destabilising actions, growing threats to the enjoyment of fundamental freedoms and human rights, the shortage of military transparency, the scourge of terrorism and violent extremism and the unprecedented migration and refugee flows confronts the OSCE with an ominous set of issues – and a responsibility to act. The OSCE has shown it can rise to this challenge. It is incumbent on us to strive for making best use of the full potential of this organisation based on its concept of comprehensive security.

The key to this remains restoring respect for the fundamental principles upon which the European security order and the OSCE are based and working together to fully implement all OSCE principles and commitments. Russia's illegal annexation of Crimea and Sevastopol, which we will not recognise, and its aggressive and destabilising actions in parts of eastern Ukraine, remains the most serious violations of our fundamental OSCE principles today.

We welcome that the crisis in and around Ukraine will remain at the top of the agenda of the incoming Austrian Chairmanship. We also support your focus on the resolution of the protracted conflicts in the Republic of Moldova and Georgia and of

the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. Achieving tangible progress within the existing negotiation formats remains a priority for the European Union.

We welcome the overarching priorities of the Austrian Chairmanship. Full implementation, revitalisation, and modernisation of the existing Conventional Arms Control and CSBM regimes, including the Vienna Document, as well as efforts to restore a legally binding, sustainable, verifiable and functional conventional arms control regime based on the norms and principles of indivisible and cooperative security remain a priority task for the Organization to ensure stability, transparency and predictability. We would also welcome a continued focus on cyber and ICT related security issues. Furthermore, building on our discussions this year, we welcome a continued focus on good governance and connectivity, bringing together a number of issues of relevance to confidence and stability in the OSCE area, and on environmental issues, including energy security and the protection of energy networks. The OSCE is one of the largest and most comprehensive regional security organisations. We therefore feel that through its Secretariat, Institutions, Field missions and eventually IGOF on Security Sector Governance and Reform, we can achieve a more coherent approach to security sector reform and governance.

We will need to continue to address the threats to fundamental freedoms we continue to witness in parts of the OSCE region, as well as the shrinking space in some states for civil society. We therefore welcome your intention to put civil society at the forefront of your work, and we recall that there can be no security without respect for democracy, the rule of law, human rights and fundamental freedoms. We must also ensure the OSCE's autonomous institutions, whose mandates and autonomy we fully support, remain able to play their indispensable role in the implementation of commitments across the OSCE area. We also reiterate our firm support for OSCE field operations and are concerned by the current tendency towards downgrading field presences.

Mr. Minister, you rightly emphasise the threat posed by violent extremism and radicalisation that leads to terrorism and the need to address its root causes. It is indeed important to direct attention not only to countering terrorism but also to preventing it. This is in line with efforts undertaken at UN level and would usefully

build on OSCE commitments and ongoing activities. We fully support the OSCE's comprehensive approach in tackling this challenge. Youth is not part of the problem, but part of the solution. We are therefore supportive of your intended focus on youth participation, following up on work done by the Swiss, Serbian and German Chairmanships. We stress that respecting human rights contributes to the effectiveness of our efforts to prevent and counter terrorism.

The OSCE region is also affected by the unprecedented scale of global forced displacement. Together, we must address this global challenge – and unlock its potential. With its comprehensive approach to security, the OSCE is well placed to contribute to the global response to the current complex situation, while complementing the efforts undertaken by other international organisations.

Given continued concerning developments in the Middle East and North Africa, the OSCE's southern region and strengthened cooperation with Partner countries should remain a priority. We are looking forward to the OSCE Mediterranean Conference this October. We would like to use this opportunity to thank Ambassador Strohal for ably chairing the Mediterranean Contact Group this year.

Halfway into the German Chairmanship and with the Informal Ministerial in Potsdam ahead of us, it is important that we work together to generate the necessary momentum to pave the way for strong results at the Ministerial Council in Hamburg, based on OSCE commitments and principles, in all three dimensions. This would reinforce much needed trust among participating States and strengthen the foundation of the Austrian Chairmanship.

Mr. Minister, we look forward to working with you next year. You can count on the support of the European Union and we wish you and your team every success.

The Candidate Countries the FORMER YUGOSLAV REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA*, MONTENEGRO* and ALBANIA*, the Country of the Stabilisation and Association Process and Potential Candidate BOSNIA and HERZEGOVINA, and the EFTA country ICELAND, member of the European Economic Area, as well as UKRAINE, the REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA, GEORGIA, ANDORRA and SAN MARINO align themselves with this statement.

* The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro and Albania continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.