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EU statement on Partners for Cooperation, 28 June

The EU would like to thank Gen. Rahimullah Burhani, Chief of Staff to the Minister of the Interior of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, Ambassador Hesham Youssef, Assistant Secretary General, League of Arab States, Mr. Shai Cohen, Director of the Regional Security and Counter Terrorism Department, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Israel, and Dr. Mohammad-Mahmoud Ould Mohamedou, Head of the Middle East and North Africa Programme at the Geneva Centre for Security Policy, for their interesting and comprehensive presentations.

We share the view that this session is an excellent opportunity to strengthen the interaction with Partners for Co-operation and to discuss the OSCE potential to contribute effectively to the promotion of stability and security in areas adjacent to the OSCE area, notably the Mediterranean and Asia.

The OSCE, as the most inclusive and comprehensive regional security organization in the Euro-Atlantic and Eurasian area, has been promoting an open dialogue among its participating States and Partners for Co-operation, on preventing and settling conflicts, building mutual understanding and fostering co-operation, sharing its experience in the CSBM area and contributing to the fight against transnational threats. Addressing

transnational threats should always be done in full compliance with respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, democracy and the rule of law. These principles and values are at the core of the OSCE's comprehensive concept of security. The EU is also convinced that strong democratic institutions and the rule of law play an important role in preventing transnational threats from arising in the first place.

The EU believes that the OSCE has valuable experience to share with all its Partners for Co-operation across the three dimension of security. The EU would like to see the dialogue between the OSCE and the Partner States leading to enhanced practical cooperation bringing concrete added-value to Partner States. The EU strongly supported the further extension of OSCE assistance to Afghanistan since 2007 and to countries from the Mediterranean region since the events of last year. Areas such as CSBMs, security sector reform, border security and management, capacity-building projects as well as second and third dimension issues, including electoral support provided by ODIHR, are among those areas where OSCE has developed a unique expertise and should continue sharing it. The two Ministerial Council decisions, nr 4/11, Strengthening OSCE Engagement with Afghanistan, and nr 5/11, on Partners for Co-operation, which were adopted in Vilnius in December last year, open avenues for deepening dialogue and strengthening practical cooperation and should be implemented without delay. We are keen, therefore, to learn more about where and how Partner States see value in drawing upon the OSCE toolbox.

It is clear - as eloquently expressed in Ambassador Youssef's and Mr Mohamedou's expose - that unprecedented changes and transformations are taking place in the Middle East and North Africa. The EU supports the view that innovative and focused policy investment is essential to assist the

governments and non-governmental actors in the region to equip themselves to address effectively peace and security challenges lying ahead. We look forward to continuing our dialogue with Partner States in question so that we can offer realistic and well-targeted support.

The Vilnius Ministerial Council decision on Strengthening OSCE engagement with Afghanistan brings new possibilities for Afghanistan across all three dimensions of security. The EU encourages Afghanistan to make the best use of this support, in areas where the OSCE is best placed to provide assistance, especially in the crucial years of transition. Assistance, among others within the first dimension, including implementing CSBMs and in relation to countering terrorism and drugs, is meant to help realize the common vision that OSCE participating States have for a stable and prosperous Afghanistan in a stable and prosperous region. The EU is strongly committed to this goal.

The OSCE's achievements, as well as its experience gained over the years in implementing and developing its CSBM framework, represent a vital pool of best practices and lessons learned to be shared with all its Partners for Co-operation, if requested. CSBM regimes and conventional arms control remain major instruments for ensuring military stability, predictability and transparency, which should be revitalized, updated and modernized. The EU fully supports this commitment and practical steps to this end.

To conclude, the EU is committed to the goal of global security and we look forward to enhance our cooperation with OSCE Partners for Co-operation in closely working together to achieve this goal.

The Acceding Country Croatia*, the Candidate Countries the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia*, Montenegro*, Iceland+ and Serbia*, the Countries of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidates Albania and Bosnia and Herzegovina, and the EFTA countries Liechtenstein and Norway, members of the European Economic Area, as well as the Republic of Moldova, Armenia, Georgia, Andorra and San Marino, align themselves with this statement.

* Croatia, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.

+ Iceland continues to be a member of the EFTA and of the European Economic Area.