



EUROPEAN UNION

**OSCE Permanent Council No 1106
Vienna, 23 June 2016**

**EU Statement in reply to the OSCE Project Co-ordinator in
Uzbekistan, H.E. Ambassador John MacGregor**

The European Union and its Member States warmly welcome H.E. Ambassador John MacGregor at his first appearance in the Permanent Council as Project Co-ordinator in Uzbekistan and thank him for his comprehensive report.

We support the Project Co-ordinator's close dialogue with the host government and project partners on activities across all three dimensions, designed to assist Uzbekistan in meeting its OSCE commitments and pursuing its reform and democratization agenda. We appreciate that the Project Co-ordinator in Uzbekistan has started developing a medium-term strategy which should better reflect the outcomes and impacts of its projects. We welcome the Project Co-ordinator's efforts to encourage participation of government officials and civil society representatives in OSCE events and regional and international trainings, and hope that the government will self-fund its representatives in future. We commend its active contribution to the enhancement of co-operation between Uzbekistan and the OSCE Institutions and executive structures.

In the Politico-Military Dimension, we welcome that the Project Co-ordinator has continued its longstanding assistance to Uzbekistan in the fight against terrorism, violent extremism, cyber threats, illegal drug trafficking, and other trans-national threats and challenges, although we question the relevance of traffic safety to the OSCE's mandate. We particularly value the Project Co-ordinator in Uzbekistan's continued support to strengthening capacities of public administration and civil society, thus enhancing practical tools for public oversight and communication between the Government and citizens. We encourage Uzbekistan to apply these tools in practise. We underline the importance of regional co-operation and co-

ordination with relevant international actors on the ground, with the aim to achieve synergy of efforts.

In the Economic and Environmental Dimension, the EU particularly appreciates activities pertaining to good governance and the rule of law, such as projects on combating money laundering, financing of terrorism, as well as fight against corruption and its prevention. We also attach great importance to the training activities in support of women entrepreneurship in rural areas as well as to supporting reforms to improve the rights of entrepreneurs.

In the Human Dimension, we continue to support the Project Co-ordinator's focus on human rights education and practical training for the police and judiciary, assistance to the Constitutional Court, the Ombudsperson Institution and the National Human Rights Centre, as well as to the capacity building of civil society and the media. We also value the Project Co-ordinator's assistance in bringing national legislation towards compliance with international standards on the prevention of torture. We encourage Uzbekistan to implement this legislation. We encourage Uzbekistan to continue to make use of the expertise of ODIHR and the RFoM.

With regard to cross-dimensional issues, we welcome the Project Co-ordinator's assistance in combating trafficking in human beings, focusing on capacity building and prevention. Co-ordination of the efforts through the National Referral Mechanism, awareness raising and enhancement of the role of law enforcement agencies in protecting and rehabilitating victims remains crucial.

The European Union stands ready to continue its cooperation with the government of Uzbekistan in a comprehensive way including in regard to its implementation of its OSCE human dimension commitments, particularly those related to freedom of expression and freedom of the media, freedom of assembly and association and freedom of religion or belief. We consider the OSCE's role in supporting the implementation of these and other commitments related to human rights important and hope to see the cooperation between Uzbekistan and the Organization further strengthened.

We acknowledge the Office's increased focus on outcomes, for example in relation to the women entrepreneurship programme, and encourage more impact-based evaluation to ensure efficient use of resources.

We reiterate the importance we attach to the EU – Uzbek dialogue in the various existing formats. We also warmly welcome Uzbekistan’s involvement in the High Level EU-Central Asia Security Dialogue, and encourage senior involvement going forward, as part of the regional political dialogue.

We would like to take this opportunity to call on Uzbekistan to pay its contribution, and its arrears, to the OSCE’s Unified Budget and to reconsider the issue of taxation of local staff salaries in the Project Co-ordinator’s Office.

In conclusion, the EU would like to thank Ambassador MacGregor and his team for their dedicated work.

The Candidate Countries the FORMER YUGOSLAV REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA*, MONTENEGRO*, SERBIA* and ALBANIA*, the Country of the Stabilisation and Association Process and Potential Candidate BOSNIA and HERZEGOVINA, and the EFTA countries ICELAND, LIECHTENSTEIN and NORWAY, members of the European Economic Area, as well as UKRAINE align themselves with this statement.

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