



EUROPEAN UNION

OSCE Permanent Council No. 1482 Vienna, 11 July 2024

EU Statement in response to the report of the Head of the OSCE Centre in Ashgabat, Ambassador John MacGregor

1. The European Union warmly welcomes the Head of the OSCE Centre in Ashgabat, Ambassador John MacGregor, to the Permanent Council and thanks him for his comprehensive report.
2. We appreciate the Centre's activities and achievements, especially against the backdrop of Russia's unprovoked, unjustifiable and illegal war of aggression against Ukraine, which undermines the collective security and stability in the whole OSCE region and has significant negative socio-economic consequences, including for the Central Asian countries.
3. We appreciate Turkmenistan's active engagement with the Centre, whose work remains key in promoting and facilitating the implementation by Turkmenistan of all its OSCE related commitments. We welcome the Centre's good cooperation with the host country, as well as the cooperation between the OSCE and the EU in planning and implementing programmatic activities in Turkmenistan.
4. Turkmenistan remains an important partner for the EU in Central Asia, including for the implementation of the EU Strategy on Central Asia and the Global Gateway Initiative, which provide valuable opportunities for forging a strong and durable partnership between the EU and the region. In view of this, we welcome the intensified EU-Turkmenistan high-level engagements and Turkmenistan's openness to dialogue, including during the visit of FM Meredov to Brussels in March and the visits of EU Special Representative for Central

Asia and EU Special Representative for Human Rights to Ashgabat in May and June 2024, respectively. We remain committed to the universal UN principles of sovereignty and territorial integrity, as well as international security, fundamental freedoms and human rights.

5. In the politico-military dimension, we appreciate the Centre's support in enhancing Turkmenistan's capacity to combat transnational threats, its cyber and ICT security, as well as enhancing the security of its State borders. Many of these activities are possible due to the major ExB project "Strengthening Border Service Capacities in Turkmenistan", supported by several EU Member States. In this context, we also applaud the meeting of Central Asian Border Commanders, convened by OSCE Secretary General Schmid in Vienna in early June. We see this work as complementary to security related EU projects, including BOMCA, CADAP, LEICA, implemented in Central Asia. We also welcome Turkmenistan's participation in the "Young Women 4 Peace in Central Asia" project, which is co-funded by the EU and implemented by the OSCE.
6. In the economic and environmental dimension, we encourage the Centre to continue to focus on improving good governance in Turkmenistan, including good environmental governance, which will enhance sustainable development and economic growth. We also support continued work on preventing and combating corruption, improving regional transport connectivity and assisting the host country in aligning its legislation on anti-money laundering and countering financing of terrorism with international standards and OSCE commitments. Additionally, we greatly appreciate the Centre's work to raise awareness of economic and environmental issues among Central Asian youth. As part of the EU-Central Asia Joint Roadmap for Deepening Ties, the EU is also active on these areas of work in Turkmenistan, notably with the development of a Trans-Caspian Transport Network through the Global Gateway initiative, and in supporting Turkmenistan in the implementation of the Global Methane Pledge.
7. The EU welcomes the Centre's work in the human dimension in promoting and supporting the implementation of OSCE principles and commitments in the

area of human rights and fundamental freedoms, as well as in support of genuine civil society. This work is much needed, since unfortunately, there still remain serious shortcomings in human rights and fundamental freedoms protection in Turkmenistan, including in terms of continued enforced disappearance of many people in the country's prisons. In this context, we appreciate the Centre's collaboration with national stakeholders in fulfilling their obligations under the National Human Rights Action Plan 2021-2025 and the National Action Plan for Gender Equality 2021-2025. On the occasion of the EU's recent annual Human Rights Dialogue with Turkmenistan in Ashgabat, we were happy to note some positive developments, notably a strengthening of the role of the Ombudsperson's office and Turkmenistan's cooperation with the ILO to eradicate forced labour and child labour. The EU stands ready to further support Turkmenistan in improving the human rights situation in all areas which continue raising concerns, including reforms of the penitentiary system.

8. As regards media freedom and development, we particularly applaud the Centre's activities in support of the digital transformation of media, capacity building of journalists and assistance in the modernization of journalism education.
9. We welcome that advancing gender equality and its mainstreaming remain high on the Centre's agenda and we are glad to see that the Centre has continued its multi-year project to raise awareness about domestic violence among the public and officials, as well as to provide aid to survivors, including through a dedicated hotline and shelter.
10. In conclusion, allow me to express our appreciation for the Centre's work, including cooperation with the EU, in a time of budgetary constraints. We wish Ambassador John MacGregor and his team every success in the fulfilment of their mandate.

The Candidate Countries NORTH MACEDONIA*, MONTENEGRO*, SERBIA*, ALBANIA*, UKRAINE, the REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA, BOSNIA and HERZEGOVINA*, the EFTA countries ICELAND and LIECHTENSTEIN,

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.