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**STATEMENT BY
THE EUROPEAN UNION AT THE 1466th MEETING OF THE
OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

21 March 2024

On the current issue raised by Türkiye on commitments regarding tolerance and non-discrimination: ensuring freedom of religion or belief

Racism, xenophobia, intolerance, anti-Semitism, and discrimination based on origin, nationality, religion, belief, disability, age, sexual orientation or gender are contrary to the values of the European Union and the OSCE and to human rights. Violence against persons because of who they are is a criminal offence punishable by law.

We welcome the priority given by the Maltese Chairmanship to the fight against intolerance and discrimination and the conference on combating anti-Semitism in the OSCE area to be held on 8 and 9 April in Malta, which will be attended by the three Personal Representatives of the OSCE Chairperson-in-Office. The European Union is firmly dedicated to the promotion and protection of freedom of religion, thought and conscience, as enshrined in its Charter of Fundamental Rights and the OSCE commitments.

The European Union advocates a comprehensive approach in its fight against intolerance, as recognized by the participating States at the Ministerial Council meeting in Madrid in 2007, and believes that a selective or fragmented approach would be incompatible with the universality of human rights. We welcome the work of the OSCE, its institutions and field operations in fostering tolerance and non-discrimination.

The European Union is firmly committed to promoting equality and tolerance and combating hate speech and all forms of discrimination, as demonstrated by the comprehensive legislation and other measures recently adopted in this area, both at the level of the European Commission and nationally. These include the Anti-racism Action Plan, the third Gender Equality Action Plan, the European LGBTIQ Equality Strategy, the European Strategy for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, the Roma Strategic Framework and the European Strategy on combating anti-Semitism. In addition, the Digital Services Act is intended to cover hate speech and hate crimes in order to better counter intolerance and discrimination, particularly online.

We remain seriously concerned by the negative consequences of Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine. In flagrant violation of international law and in defiance of Ukraine's sovereignty, the Ukrainian population in the territories illegally occupied by Russia is being forced to accept Russian passports on pain of being denied access to public employment, humanitarian aid, health services and education. The situation of the Tatars in Crimea is particularly worrying, according to the testimonies of their representatives recently heard here at the Hofburg. Numerous international reports, including those of the Office for Democratic

Institutions and Human Rights, have also highlighted discrimination against members of the LGBTIQ community, both in the occupied territories and in Russia itself.

The number of attacks on people of the Jewish or Muslim faith in the OSCE area in the wake of the Middle East conflict is of deep concern and reminds us that it is more than ever our duty to remain vigilant and to act resolutely against all forms of anti-Semitism, racism and discrimination.

The candidate countries North Macedonia¹, Montenegro¹, Albania¹, Ukraine, the Republic of Moldova, Bosnia and Herzegovina¹ and Georgia, the European Free Trade Association countries and members of the European Economic Area Iceland and Liechtenstein, as well as Andorra and San Marino, align themselves with this statement.

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