



## EUROPEAN UNION

### OSCE Permanent Council No.1488 Vienna, 19 September 2024

#### **EU Statement in response to the Address by the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Finland, H.E. Elina Valtonen**

1. The European Union warmly welcomes the incoming OSCE Chairperson-in Office, Foreign Minister Valtonen, here in Vienna. Minister Valtonen, Finland's upcoming OSCE Chairpersonship in 2025, will mark 50 years since the signing of the Helsinki Final Act, one of the OSCE's foundational documents. In these critical times for European and global security and stability, this milestone should serve as a reminder and reaffirmation of our collective commitment to multilateralism and a rules-based international order. The principles and commitments enshrined in the Helsinki Final Act and subsequent OSCE documents remain a valid *acquis* and continue to provide a solid foundation for European security. In the face of unprecedented challenges, the role of the OSCE and its framework for ensuring peace and stability across the region are more crucial than ever.
2. Against this background, the EU commends the broad and consultative approach in Finland's Chairpersonship preparations, both in Vienna and in other capitals. This lends additional weight and credibility to the priorities, which have strong support from a vast majority of participating States.
3. Minister Valtonen, Russia's ongoing illegal, unprovoked, and unjustifiable war of aggression against Ukraine, with Belarus' complicity, is the gravest threat to European security since World War II. In gross violation of international law, including the UN Charter and OSCE principles and commitments, Russia has invaded another OSCE participating State —its sovereign and peaceful neighbour, Ukraine. Russia must immediately cease its war of aggression against Ukraine and unconditionally withdraw

all its forces and military equipment from the entire territory of Ukraine, within its internationally recognised borders.

4. The EU welcomes Finland's prioritisation of supporting Ukraine as a central pillar of its Chairpersonship, an approach rightly followed by the current and previous Chairpersons. We will continue to support Ukraine and its people in their rightful self-defence against Russia's brutal war of aggression in order to achieve the just and lasting peace they deserve. We remain committed to supporting Ukraine's resilience and reconstruction, in line with its European future. We see the need for OSCE leadership, executive structures, and autonomous institutions to strengthen the Organisation's ongoing engagement and assistance in Ukraine, including through the Support Programme for Ukraine and ODIHR's Ukraine Monitoring Initiative.
5. Russia bears full responsibility for its war of aggression, and those responsible must be held accountable for all their heinous acts against Ukraine and its people. We fully support all measures, including within the OSCE, to ensure accountability for violations of international law, including international human rights law and international humanitarian law, in connection with Russia's war of aggression, including for the crime of aggression.
6. Recognising the destabilising regional consequences of Russia's war of aggression, we trust that your Chairpersonship will maintain a focus on the cross-dimensional and cross-regional impacts of Russia's war. We believe that the OSCE should also continue to support all countries affected by Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine, including the Republic of Moldova, by helping to bolster their resilience.
7. The EU strongly supports your intention to ensure that efforts to resolve existing conflicts and ease tensions remain the OSCE's top priority. Progress in this area will strengthen security across the OSCE region. The OSCE can play a unique role in conflict and crisis situations, including through its Conflict Cycle toolbox.
8. We agree that the OSCE's comprehensive security concept and diverse set of tools remain essential in helping participating States address and

overcome a wide range of threats, extending beyond military risks, from climate change to malicious activities and disinformation. We appreciate Finland's initiative to develop the innovative OSCE Toolbox app, empowering participating States to utilise the full potential of the Organisation.

9. We welcome Finland's emphasis on inclusivity and societal resilience, ensuring that women, youth, persons with disabilities and civil society have a voice in OSCE processes. Promoting and mainstreaming gender equality and youth across all dimensions is crucial to advancing the OSCE's concept of comprehensive security. We reiterate the vital role civil society organisations and human rights defenders play in ensuring accountability and sustaining vibrant democracies.
10. We strongly support your intention to strengthen the Organisation's functionality. We would also like to express our appreciation and continued support for the dedicated efforts of the Maltese Chairpersonship in seeking solutions for the top four leadership positions, the issue of future chairpersonships and the Unified Budget. We will continue to support the Maltese Chairpersonship in reaching consensus without delay on these issues. With regard to the executive structures and autonomous institutions—ODIHR, HCNM, and RFoM — we emphasise that it is our shared responsibility to preserve their strong mandates, ensure proper leadership, and guarantee their effective functioning and adequate budgets. We value their crucial work in helping participating States implement OSCE commitments and addressing the consequences of Russia's war of aggression. We also recognise the importance of the OSCE's concrete work through its Field Operations.
11. The EU remains convinced of the importance of effective cooperation with our Mediterranean and Asian Partners for addressing global challenges.
12. Minister Valtonen, the EU firmly believes that upholding and implementing international law and OSCE principles and commitments, along with meaningful dialogue, transparency, and cooperation, are the only ways to effectively address cross-dimensional challenges, resolve disputes, and

achieve peace, security, and stability. Fundamental principles such as sovereignty, territorial integrity, and the peaceful resolution of disputes are collective obligations that are neither negotiable nor subject to revision or re-interpretation. Russia's deliberate attempts to undermine the European security order and the international rules-based system, as seen in particular in Georgia in 2008 and in Ukraine since 2014, have no place in the 21st century.

13. In conclusion, we look forward to your Chairpersonship's political leadership of the OSCE. Rest assured of the EU's full support and cooperation in reinforcing our Organisation and safeguarding its achievements, along with the collectively agreed principles and commitments on which it is built. We wish you and your dedicated team every success.

The Candidate Countries NORTH MACEDONIA\*, MONTENEGRO\*, ALBANIA\*, UKRAINE, the REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA, BOSNIA and HERZEGOVINA\*, and GEORGIA, the EFTA countries ICELAND and LIECHTENSTEIN, members of the European Economic Area, as well as ANDORRA, MONACO and SAN MARINO align themselves with this statement.

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