



EUROPEAN UNION

OSCE Permanent Council No. 1489 Vienna, 26 September 2024

EU Statement in Response to the Report of the Head of the OSCE Programme Office in Dushanbe, Ambassador Willy Kempel

1. The European Union warmly welcomes Ambassador Kempel to the Permanent Council for the first time since assuming his duties, and thanks him for this comprehensive report. We place great importance on the work of the OSCE Programme Office in Dushanbe and appreciate its valuable cooperation with the EU Delegation to Tajikistan.
2. We believe that the Office's new leadership, reduced staff turnover, greater budgetary predictability, and continued operational flexibility are key to responding and adapting to Tajikistan's changing priorities and regional economic and security challenges. The EU stands ready to continue its cooperation with the Programme Office.
3. We are pleased with the continuation of the EU-supported initiative to enhance the operational capacities of Tajik Border Troops in addressing security-related threats. In response to the evolving regional security setting, and upon the request and approval of the Tajik government, the EU and OSCE launched the second phase of the FPI-funded project "Stabilization of Tajikistan's Southern Border Region with Afghanistan" in July 2022. The project focuses on enhancing the operational capacity of the first responders of the Committee of Emergency Situations and Civil Defence (CoESCD), and Tajikistan's Border Troops. While the current project phase concludes this month, we look forward to continuing our cooperation in this field.

4. We welcome the Office's commitment to continue co-chairing the Border Implementation Group of like-minded donors together with the EU Delegation and IOM.
5. We appreciate the Office's activities across all three OSCE dimensions and its strong focus on gender equality, as well as the mainstreaming of gender equality and human rights in project activities. In this regard, we support the exchange of good practices through the organisation of study visits involving government officials and representatives from civil society. However, we remain still concerned about the human rights situation in Tajikistan and stress the importance of the Office's work in the Human Dimension. Support to reform processes and their effective implementation are crucial for the long-term development of Tajikistan.
6. We welcome the Office's support to government and civil society in implementing the State Programme on Human Rights Education and the National Strategy on Human Rights Protection. We reiterate the importance of the Office's work to prevent torture and other forms of ill-treatment and urge Tajikistan to ratify the Protocol to the UN Convention against Torture. In this context, we are concerned by reports of discrimination and ill-treatment of Central Asian migrant workers in Russia, many of Tajik origin, which have intensified in recent months. Russia must respect their rights, freedoms and dignity, and we deplore any attempts by Russia to exploit foreign citizens in its war of aggression against Ukraine.
7. We also consider the work on freedom of the media and freedom of expression as a priority. We call on the Tajik authorities to fully implement all OSCE commitments on freedom of expression and media freedom, ensuring that dissenting voices can be heard. Together with the EU, the Office supported a participatory process that involved media practitioners and Tajik civil society in formulating a new draft law on mass media, which will serve as the legally binding framework for Tajik media in the future.
8. We underline the EU Strategy on Central Asia, which focuses on promoting resilience, prosperity and regional cooperation to forge a strong and durable partnership between the EU and Central Asia. The promotion and protection of the rule of law, human rights and fundamental freedoms, civil society, women's

rights and the rights of persons belonging to vulnerable groups, along with sustainable development and good governance, must remain at the core of these relations. Working collaboratively with the OSCE and its field missions, including the Programme Office in Dushanbe, is an important component of the Strategy, and we look forward to enhancing this cooperation further.

9. In conclusion, we once again thank Ambassador Kempel and wish him and his dedicated team every success.

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

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