



EUROPEAN UNION

OSCE Annual Security Review Conference

Vienna, 23 June 2020

Opening session

The European Union would like to start by thanking the OSCE Chairperson-in-Office Prime Minister Rama, his team and the OSCE Secretariat for organising this year's Annual Security Review Conference. We value this opportunity to review ongoing security challenges in the OSCE region with a view to reinforce our collective efforts in the implementation of our commitments in the politico-military dimension of security.

The topic of this year's ASRC, "Building Stability through Dialogue", is particularly important. The outbreak of COVID-19 is a test of the multilateral system's ability to overcome global challenges through dialogue, transparency, confidence and collective action. Indeed, the rules-based international order – with the UN at its core in partnership with regional organisations – is a warrant of stability and must be upheld and strengthened. There is no other option. The pandemic already showed it can deepen existing conflicts and generate new geopolitical tensions. That is why the EU was one of the earliest and strongest supporter of the call by UNSG Guterres for a global ceasefire. To this end, we need platforms such as the OSCE to restore trust and to construct peace and security in Europe and beyond by ensuring inclusive dialogue and fostering multilateral cooperation.

To fully harness our Organisation's potential and address the challenges that we are all facing together, today more than ever we need to come back to the spirit and the letter of the principles and commitments enshrined in Helsinki Final Act and the Paris Charter. Based on them, the EU is committed to promoting effective multilateralism

and a rules-based security order, rooted in international law and dialogue. Our Union has come very far in making Europe safer and more peaceful. And thanks to our global action, we have also helped to do the same around the world. We strongly believe that preserving regional security and stability is in all our interest: maintaining peace and security in Europe crucially depends on respect for the rules agreed by all 57 OSCE participating States, including all of our 27 EU Member States. Unfortunately, today, we are still collectively confronted with many threats and challenges: use or threat of use of force to change internationally recognised borders as well as to violate sovereignty and internationally recognized sovereign rights, conflict situations including protracted conflicts, terrorism, violent extremism and organised crime, malicious cyber activity, disinformation and other hybrid threats and human rights violations.

Once more, this ASRC takes place in the context of a serious security crisis in Europe caused by the clear and repeated violation of Ukrainian sovereignty and territorial integrity by acts of aggression by the Russian armed forces resulting in the conflict in eastern Ukraine and the illegal annexation of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol to the Russian Federation which we strongly condemn and will not recognize. The European Union will remain committed to fully implement this non-recognition policy, including through restrictive measures. The EU recalls its unwavering support to the sovereignty, territorial integrity, unity and independence of Ukraine within its internationally recognised borders, and calls upon Russia to seek a sustainable political resolution to the conflict in eastern Ukraine. We urge Russia to uphold these fundamental principles that it has itself invoked many times and to contribute, by acts and public pronouncements, to stabilising the situation and reversing moves that contravene these principles.

This conflict continues to pose a severe challenge to European Security and has demonstrated the dangerous consequences that follow when fundamental principles of the OSCE are violated. In addition, the protracted conflicts in the Republic of Moldova and in Georgia as well as the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict – continue to fragilise peace and stability and can be resolved only if the parties involved agree to solve them in line with the OSCE principles. We therefore welcome today's special session on Ukraine and the later sessions focusing on conflict and crisis situations in

other OSCE areas and on the OSCE's role in in early warning, conflict prevention, crisis management, conflict resolution and post conflict rehabilitation.

We appreciate the specific focus placed on transnational threats this year. Some of the greatest challenges to peace and security today are threats which permeate national borders, affect entire regions and ultimately the international community as a whole, such as terrorism and violent extremism as well as organised crime cyber security, border security challenges, as well as hybrid threats, including disinformation. The nature of these threats is varied, but they affect all participating States. Many new threats with serious consequences for our collective security have a non-military character, which shows the relevance of the OSCE multi-dimensional approach. Finally, these threats have been increasing over the past few years, which pleads for concrete and timely actions at the OSCE level to address transnational challenges to security. The COVID-19 pandemic has especially shown that in a globalized world, these challenges can only be addressed through an integrated and coherent response based on co-operation among OSCE participating States, and to the extent possible with Partners for Co-operation, and by ensuring the full protection of human rights and the promotion of fundamental freedoms. The EU stands firmly by its neighbours in response to COVID-19. The EU and its Member States have provided immediate assistance to partner countries by mobilising emergency support packages in the Western Balkans, Eastern Partnership countries and Central Asia to support health-related and socio-economic needs, underlining the strong relations and particular interest of the EU for these regions.

We highly value the Structured Dialogue, including its last meeting on the subject of stability and predictability and which is the subject of a special session tomorrow, which we are ready to develop further in accordance with the Hamburg Declaration, as a transparent, inclusive process, owned and driven by participating States, without a predetermined outcome and of high relevance for the EU. We once again emphasise the obligation of all participating States to fully implement the existing commitments in the politico-military area in letter and spirit as well as the need to work towards creating an environment conducive to reinvigorating Conventional Arms Control and CSBMs. We remain committed to the substantial modernisation of the Vienna Document, as well as the further development of Conventional Arms Control, CSBMs and other

instruments in the politico-military area. We are concerned about the situation regarding the Open Skies Treaty, which is one of the three pillars of our arms control architecture and serves as a vital confidence and security building measure. We call on Russia to comply with its commitments under the Treaty. We take note of the US decision but are deeply concerned about the effects on the functioning of the Treaty in the case of a possible withdrawal. We hope that the US will reconsider its decision.

The question of how to preserve peace and strengthen security in the OSCE area and beyond remains crucial to the EU and its citizens. When appointed, President of the European Commission Ursula Van der Leyen has stated her ambition for a “geopolitical Europe”, which includes giving ourselves the means for our ambitions. For instance: (1) over the past year, Member States have taken further steps towards developing the full spectrum of defence capabilities within the EU framework that we need for our common security and defense, from capabilities to operations, and investing more in civilian crisis management; (2) we are cooperating more than ever with our partners, and neighbours in particular, addressing common challenges such as hybrid and cyber threats, arms trafficking, terrorism, as well as enhancing our cooperation in the areas of energy, transport and trade. Examples range from enhanced co-operation with the OSCE, to strengthened partnership with NATO; from reconfirming the European perspective of the Western Balkans and ambitious agreements, for instance with the Republic of Moldova, Ukraine and Georgia, but also Canada or Japan, to the new EU Central Asia Strategy; (3) to promote democracy, human rights, development and peace, we promote resilience to support states and societies undergoing change; (4) we also continue to advance the "Women, Peace and Security" agenda. The role women play in securing peace and security is crucial and we need to harness their contributions. This was the central reason for the adoption, 20 years ago, of the ground-breaking resolution UNSC 1325. We welcome the participation of the OSCE as an observer in the Regional Acceleration of Resolution (RAR) 1325 initiative, launched in October 2019 together with the African Union, NATO and UN Women. Finally, we also have deepened relations with youth and civil society, bringing them to the table of decision-makers.

Let me conclude by recalling that the OSCE provides a unique and valuable platform for dialogue and a normative framework to address our common security threats and challenges together. The values, principles and commitments to which we have all subscribed constitute the corner stone of security and political stability in the OSCE area and remain fully valid when we will this year commemorate the 45th anniversary of the Helsinki Final Act and the 30th anniversary of the Paris Charter for a New Europe. Full respect for them must be restored and they must be implemented by all in good faith. You can rest assured that the EU will continue to actively play its part.

Thank you.

The Candidate Countries REPUBLIC of NORTH MACEDONIA*, MONTENEGRO* and ALBANIA*, the EFTA country LIECHTENSTEIN, member of the European Economic Area, as well as the REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA and GEORGIA align themselves with this statement.

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