



EUROPEAN UNION

OSCE Permanent Council No. 1419 Vienna, 20 April 2023

EU Statement in response to the Address by the Secretary General of the Council of Europe, Ms. Marija Pejčinović Burić

1. The European Union warmly welcomes to the Permanent Council the Secretary General of the Council of Europe, Ms. Marija Pejčinović Burić.
2. Madame Secretary General, Russia's unprovoked, unjustified and illegal war of aggression against Ukraine, which we condemn in the strongest possible terms, has had a dramatic impact on European security. We strongly support the re-establishment of the Council's Office in Ukraine and welcome the adoption of the new Action Plan for Ukraine "Resilience, Recovery and Reconstruction" for 2023-2026, as well as the support to the work of the Prosecutor General of Ukraine. It is important to continue focusing our efforts on supporting Ukraine through all possible means. In light of this, we welcome your visit to Ukraine earlier this month.
3. We look forward to the upcoming fourth Summit of the Council of Europe in Reykjavik in May 2023. The Summit will allow us to unite around our common values and recommit to the obligation to respect, protect and fulfil human rights, democracy, and the rule of law. Strengthening our commitment to these values is particularly important in times of democratic backsliding and rising authoritarianism. The Council of Europe continues to play a crucial standard-setting role in the fields of human rights, democracy and the rule of law.
4. The Summit will be an important opportunity to send a clear message of support to Ukraine, including in relation to fighting impunity and holding all those responsible for

Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine to account. We welcome, among other things, the plans for the Summit to establish a register to record and document evidence and claims of damage, loss, or injury that have resulted from the Russian aggression against Ukraine.

5. Last year, due to Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine, the Committee of Ministers first decided to suspend Russia's rights of representation and later to cease its membership of the Organisation entirely. Russia bears full responsibility for its war of aggression against Ukraine and all its consequences. With its illegal, unprovoked and unjustified aggression against Ukraine, a fellow member State of the Council of Europe, Russia violated the fundamental principles of the CoE Statute, the UN Charter, and international law, including OSCE principles and commitments. That is not and will never be tolerated.
6. We regret that the Russian people will again suffer the consequences of their government's actions. As a result of Russia's aggression, Russian citizens no longer benefit from the protections granted by the European Convention on Human Rights. This is highly alarming as it further worsens the already dire human rights situation in the country. We reiterate that Russia remains obliged to execute the judgments of the Court related to the cases brought before it until September 2022. The European Union strongly supports human rights defenders, democratic forces, free media, and independent civil society in Russia. We urge Russia to rapidly return to full compliance with international law, including international human rights law and international humanitarian law.
7. Madame Secretary General, the recently adopted EU priorities for cooperation with the Council of Europe in 2023-2024 underline the EU's commitment to further strengthening our strategic partnership with the Council as a main institutional partner in political, legal, and financial terms. The EU reaffirms its commitment to accede to the European Convention on Human Rights with the objective of reinforcing the common values of the Union and enhancing the coherence of human rights protection in Europe. We also commend the indispensable work of the European Court of Human Rights and call for the full execution of the Court's judgments by all its Member States. We acknowledge the increasing significance of the Court in conflict situations, through its interim measures and judgments in inter-state cases.

8. We welcome the active dialogue and practical cooperation between the OSCE and the Council of Europe, and we believe that there is considerable complementarity between the work of the two organisations. While we acknowledge the continued relevance of the four identified priority areas, we also believe that there is scope for further broadening our cooperation, particularly between OSCE field operations and CoE offices on the ground. Safeguarding democratic institutions, the rule of law, and human rights, including media freedom, are prerequisites for lasting security and a return to peace on our continent. We should continue to work together to ensure proper working conditions for civil society, whose role in promoting and protecting human rights and democracy is vital, as well as to combat all forms of gender-based violence.
9. In conclusion, the EU looks forward to continuing the close cooperation between the OSCE and the Council of Europe and we wish you, Ms. Pejčinović Burić, every success in the exercise of your mandate.

The Candidate Countries NORTH MACEDONIA*, MONTENEGRO*, ALBANIA*, UKRAINE, the REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA, and BOSNIA and HERZEGOVINA*, the Potential Candidate Country GEORGIA, and the EFTA country ICELAND, member 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.