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EU Statement in Response to the Presentations by the Chairpersons of the Economic and Environmental Committee and the Human Dimension Committee

The European Union warmly thanks the Chairpersons of the Economic and Environmental Committee and the Human Dimension Committee for presenting the respective work programmes for this year.

We thank Ambassador Sarybay for the work done in 2018 and for presenting an outline of the planned work in the EEC this year. We welcome that you will be continuing your work as Chair of the EEC also in 2019. The Second Dimension is an integral part of the comprehensive security approach of the OSCE and can contribute in many ways to conflict prevention and confidence building. As we have said on previous occasions, we welcome that aspects of anti-corruption, good governance, connectivity, energy efficiency and security, as well as sustainable development, including environmental policies, will feature on our work plan in 2019. These areas are priorities for the EU and also reflect welcome continuity of our work in the Second Dimension under previous chairmanships. We very much welcome efforts aimed at aligning the work of the Economic and Environmental Committee with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

We are pleased to see that the agenda in the field of the Second Dimension will also allow us to build on the important Ministerial Council decisions on Human Capital Development in the Digital Era as well as on the Digital Economy as a Driver for Promoting Co-operation, Security and Growth that we agreed upon in Milan. However, we deeply regret that we were not able to find consensus on a text dealing with transnational organised crime which damages the environment. Negotiations on this text should resume as soon as possible.

We would like to welcome Ambassador Ivo Šrámek as new Chair of the Human Dimension Committee and thank him for the outline of the calendar of this year. We welcome the choice of topics, in particular the focus on the freedom of expression, torture prevention, political participation and elections. Many of these topics could be explored through different angles than before, for instance media freedom and disinformation during elections, importance of investigative journalism, freedom of expression online, access to information as a prerequisite for effective participation or torture prevention and rule of law. We welcome the meeting on tolerance and non-discrimination and see merit in re-focusing on hate crime, as well as addressing all forms of discrimination. We also welcome the intention to discuss aspects related to Roma and Sinti participation in public and political life, in light of the third status report on the implementation of the OSCE Action Plan on Roma and Sinti Issues issued at the end of 2018.

We welcome continued discussions on safety of journalists and violence against women and girls, also in view of implementing the recently adopted decisions in Milan and further advancing our commitments.

With regard to the Human Dimension events in 2019, we believe that fundamental freedoms should be in focus during the HDIM special days and the Human Dimension Seminar. We will engage constructively in the negotiations on the consensus-based events and we fully support the Slovak Chairmanship in its efforts to timely adopt the needed Decisions.

We strongly support the active involvement of a broad range of stakeholders in the work of the Committees, particularly by inviting speakers from civil society, autonomous institutions and field missions. In keeping with the efforts of previous years, we hope that there will also be opportunities to engage with the OSCE SMM in relevant meetings of the EEC and HDC. In the HDC we welcome that the working methods of the previous Chair will also be continued when it comes to drafting concept notes and ensuring more interaction during the meetings.

We equally welcome the continued practice of voluntary reporting in the Human Dimension Committee and we thank those participating States that made efforts and presented such reports. In the EEC, we welcome the intention to build on efforts commenced under the Italian CiO to provide participating States with opportunities to

share experiences and best practices on national policies. We encourage participating States to make full use of the relevant occasions to further enrich our discussions throughout the three dimensions.

As gender equality remains a key priority for the European Union, we welcome the intention of the Human Dimension Committee Chair to mainstream gender throughout the work of the Committee and we would be interested to hear about any efforts to ensure that gender is also fully mainstreamed in the Second Dimension.

In concluding, I wish to express the full support of the European Union and its Member States to the important work that Ambassadors Sarybay and Šrámek will conduct this year. We wish them every success and we look forward to working together and assure them of the EU's support. We look forward to engaging in the forthcoming discussions with the Chair of the Security Committee.

The Candidate Countries the FORMER YUGOSLAV REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA*, MONTENEGRO*, SERBIA* and ALBANIA*, the Country of the Stabilisation and Association Process and Potential Candidate BOSNIA and HERZEGOVINA, and the EFTA countries ICELAND and LIECHTENSTEIN, members of the European Economic Area, as well as UKRAINE, the REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA, GEORGIA, ANDORRA, and SAN MARINO align themselves with this statement.

* The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Albania continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.