



## EUROPEAN UNION

### OSCE Permanent Council No. 1321 Vienna,

### **EU Statement on the Report by the Head of the OSCE Programme Office in Nur-Sultan, Amb. Frobarth**

The European Union and its Member States warmly welcome Ambassador Frobarth to the Permanent Council in his new capacity and thank him for his comprehensive report.

We appreciate the Programme Office's achievements despite the COVID-19 related restrictions and commend the adaption of its work to meet those challenges. We take positive note of the good cooperation between the Programme Office and the host authorities and civil society, and the high-level meetings. We welcome the visit of the OSCE Chairperson-in-Office, Swedish Minister of Foreign Affairs Ann Linde took place, despite the current circumstances

The European Union welcomes the organisation of the Parliamentary elections in January 2021. However, the EU urges Kazakhstan to address systemic shortcomings, in relation to respect for freedom of association, assembly and expression, and to continue to cooperate constructively with ODIHR and fully implement its longstanding recommendations.

We appreciate the continued contribution of the Office in advancing Kazakhstan's development in all three dimensions and the focus on a broad range of topical issues. We value the Office's contribution to the advancement of the host country's strategic plans as well as the implementation of the OSCE commitments. We take positive note of the regional engagement of the Office and welcome its longstanding cooperation

with local partners, including with civil society, media, academia, and the private sector. We appreciate that the programmatic activities often include a gender perspective and lay focus on engaging youth.

In the Politico-Military Dimension, we welcome the topical activities, such as the support to the police reform and enhancement of border security through building capacities and contributing to enhancement of operating procedures. We appreciate activities on cyber security and VERLT, including awareness raising and capacity building. In this context, we welcome the work on media development, freedom of expression and countering hate speech, while providing a platform for discussions and close cooperation with civil society.

In the Second Dimension, we welcome the continued work on promoting good governance, combating corruption, money laundering, and terrorism financing as well as the wildlife crime of poaching. The EU supports raising OSCE's profile in promoting environmental and climate issues in particular in Central Asia. We also welcome the Office's assistance to the Government's efforts on regional water management, and on improving the national legislative framework protecting the environment and the enhancement of the related consultative process. We appreciate your work on women's empowerment, including through the Rural Women's Forum. We would be interested in learning about the challenges you faced when implementing this initiative, in particular with regards to the impacts of COVID-19 pandemic and the existing digital divides.

In the Human Dimension, we commend the Office for continuing the promotion of human rights and fundamental freedoms, the rule of law and the strengthening of democratic institutions as the core of the comprehensive security approach. We attach great importance to effective cooperation with civil society and commend the establishment of a pool of national human rights and the rule of law experts. We would be interested to learn about your plans of further engagement with this valuable network. We welcome the important work on criminal justice reform, prevention of torture, elimination of discrimination and combating trafficking in human beings. We appreciate the Office's work in the field of gender-based and domestic violence, including through the support of the crisis centres.

On this occasion, we underline the EU Strategy on Central Asia focusing as a valuable opportunity for the EU and Central Asia to forge a strong and durable partnership. The

promotion and protection of rule of law, human rights and fundamental freedoms, civil society, the rights of women, sustainable development, and good governance must remain at the core of the relations. In the framework of our EU Enhanced Partnership and Cooperation Agreement with Kazakhstan and the EU Central Asia Strategy, we stand ready to advance EU-Kazakhstan relations more broadly and to continue to support Kazakhstan's reform and modernisation processes as well as democracy, stability and inclusivity in the country.

In conclusion, we thank Ambassador Frobarth for his report. We thank for his efforts as Head of Programme Office and we wish him and his staff all the success for their work throughout the year.

The Candidate Countries REPUBLIC of NORTH 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 and the REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA align themselves with this statement.

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