



EUROPEAN UNION

OSCE Permanent Council No. 1335 Vienna, 16 September 2021

EU Statement in response to the President of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly

Final (1004 words)

1. The European Union warmly welcomes the President of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, Ms Margareta Cederfelt, for her first appearance before the Permanent Council. We congratulate you on your election during the remote session in July and we wish you all the best in your new important leadership responsibility.
2. We welcome your very recent meeting in Stockholm with the Chairperson-in-Office Swedish Foreign Minister Ann Linde. It is a significant sign of the close cooperation between the parliamentary side and the governmental side of our Organization.
3. As we focus more and more on the Ministerial Council in Stockholm, we should remind ourselves of the motto of the Swedish Chairpersonship: "Back to Basics: our Commitments, our Security, our OSCE". Today, the spirit and the letter of the Helsinki Final Act and the Charter of Paris continue being seriously challenged. Maintaining peace and security crucially depends on respect for the rules of the OSCE which have been agreed by all 57 OSCE participating States.
4. We reiterate our condemnation of Russia's illegal annexation of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol and its continuous acts of aggression in eastern Ukraine. These acts are a breach of international law and of the OSCE principles and commitments which are fundamental to the European Security Order. The EU reaffirms its resolute support for Ukraine's independence, sovereignty, unity and territorial integrity, within its internationally recognized borders. We appreciate the attention paid by the Parliamentary Assembly and by you personally to the resolution of this conflict.

5. Democracy, fundamental freedoms and the rule of law have come under unprecedented and severe attack in Belarus in the run-up to and since the 9 August 2020 fraudulent presidential elections. Together with like-minded partners, the EU has been vocal and united in calling on the Lukashenka regime to end its repressive practices and release and rehabilitate unconditionally the more than 661 political prisoners. We share your regret that the regime has not accepted the reiterated offers to facilitate a serious, credible and inclusive political process resulting in free and fair elections under the observation of OSCE/ODIHR. We also appreciate your attention to the instrumentalization of migrants for political purposes by the authorities in Belarus.
6. We welcome the attention you have been paying to the ongoing developments in Afghanistan which will have long-term consequences for the region. The well-being and security of Afghan citizens, political and human rights achievements, in particular those of women and girls, as well as regional and international security, are at stake. We take note with interest the high-level visits you are planning to Central Asia in the coming months.
7. In a recent OpEd, you highlighted that election observation is one of the OSCE's most visible activities and is something that should be valued and respected. We agree with you and welcome the numerous election observation missions the Parliamentary Assembly has carried out together with ODIHR throughout this year and will observe with interest those scheduled in the upcoming months. We reiterate our strong support for the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly's election observations and ODIHR's methodology, which is globally recognized and based on the principles of independence, impartiality and professionalism, as spelled out in MC Decision 19/06. All participating States have given ODIHR the mandate to determine what is necessary in terms of size and format of a mission to conduct its work in an effective and credible manner. We regret the decision by the Russian authorities to introduce limitations to the election observation which make it impossible to have a credible and independent observation of the upcoming State Duma elections.

8. We share the importance you attach to the Women, Peace and Security agenda, which is also a priority for the European Union. Promoting and mainstreaming gender equality throughout all dimensions is an important aspect of advancing the OSCE's concept of comprehensive security.
9. The EU values the cooperation between the Parliamentary Assembly and the OSCE autonomous institutions as lasting security cannot be sustained without full respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, democracy, rule of law and the inclusion of civil society. The Human Dimension Implementation Meeting remains a unique platform for engaging with civil society and for listening to independent voices, exchanging information and good practices, and an opportunity for all of us to be held to account in relation to our OSCE commitments. The EU fully supported the CiO's relentless efforts to adopt the needed HDIM Decisions. However, we regret that consensus could not be reached due to the position of one participating State.
10. We appreciate the activities of the PA Special Representatives and Committees and have taken good note of your recent appointments of Special Representatives, several of whom are MPs from EU Member States. The EU also supports efforts to enhance parliamentary relations with our Mediterranean Partners to address security in the OSCE area. We also appreciate the intention to investigate opportunities to similarly engage with our Asian Partners for Cooperation.
11. After welcoming the launch of the "Call for Action document" in December 2020, we follow with attention the initiative "Call for Action – Helsinki + 50 Process" with its series of events dedicated to discussing specific challenges and issues facing the Organization as it heads towards the 50th anniversary of the Helsinki Final Act. As we consider the recommendations, we appreciate the appeal to provide stronger political support to the Organization and its executive structures – including the autonomous institutions – as well as adequate resources.
12. In closing, we wish to thank Ambassador Andreas Nothelle for the great work he has done since the establishment of the PA office in Vienna. We also congratulate his successor Ambassador Miodrag Panceski and wish him all the best in his important responsibility. Finally, we would like to wish you, Ms Margareta Cederfelt, all the best

in your new tasks and reaffirm our high appreciation for the contribution the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly and its members offer to the implementation of OSCE principles and commitments, resulting in stronger security and cooperation for our region.

The Candidate Countries REPUBLIC of NORTH MACEDONIA*, MONTENEGRO* and ALBANIA*, and the EFTA countries ICELAND and LIECHTENSTEIN, members of the European Economic Area, as well as UKRAINE, GEORGIA, ANDORRA and SAN MARINO align themselves with this statement.

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