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STATEMENT BY THE OSCE EUROPEAN UNION AT THE 978th MEETING OF THE OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL

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In response to the report by the OSCE Special Representative and Co-ordinator for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings

The European Union and its Member States thank the OSCE Special Representative and Co-ordinator for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings for the annual report of her activities, which demonstrates the important work carried out by the OSCE's executive structures. We congratulate them for it.

Ms. Giammarinaro, this is your final presentation of an annual report to the Permanent Council on account of your impending departure from the OSCE. We should like to express our gratitude for your sustained efforts during the past four years in combating trafficking.

This commitment has not been in vain, because the participating States adopted a decision at the recent Ministerial Council meeting to supplement and enhance the OSCE Action Plan to Combat Trafficking in Human Beings. We thank the Ukrainian Chairmanship for the priority given to this topic and congratulate it for the noteworthy commitment of its team.

The European Union has been involved constructively and resolutely in this process, and we welcome the outcome. Combating trafficking in human beings is one of our priorities, based on Directive 2011/36/EU and on a strategy aimed in particular at offering better protection to victims.

You yourself advocate this human approach, as the title of your report indicates. There is still work to be done to improve the identification of victims. This calls for a partnership approach, in particular with civil society, which contributes considerably to rapidly identifying potential victims and providing them with the necessary assistance. We are very keen on this co-operative approach at the heart of the European Civil Society Platform initiative, the second meeting of which took place last week in Brussels.

It is vital to support victims effectively during the judicial phase aimed at prosecuting and punishing traffickers while protecting the victims and facilitating their access to compensation mechanisms. We appreciate the work carried out this year to make States aware of the principle of non-punishment of victims of trafficking who are forced to commit offences. We were interested to note in the report that several OSCE missions have already

started putting your recommendations into practice and using them in their assistance activities.

We need to continue to heighten the awareness of stakeholders of still little known forms of trafficking that nevertheless have an equally devastating effect on victims, be it trafficking to remove organs or for domestic servitude. The combating of these forms of trafficking needs to be improved. Your office's activities contribute to this, for example by acting to oppose the exploitation of domestic staff in diplomatic households. We look forward to studying the handbook on this subject that your office will be publishing in 2014.

Your country visits are a valuable way of maintaining dialogue with the highest authorities and actors in the field. We support the continuation of these visits and call for the reports on them to be distributed within a reasonable period so as to ensure that they remain relevant.

It is vital to act in a concerted and co-ordinated manner with other partners and international organizations so as to increase the impact of initiatives to combat trafficking. This approach was well illustrated during the European Union Anti-Trafficking Day on 18 October 2013 in your joint statement with the United Nations Special Rapporteur on Trafficking in Persons and the President of the Council of Europe's Group of Experts on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings (GRETA). We welcome the initiative by the future Swiss Chairmanship of the OSCE and the Austrian Chairmanship of the Council of Europe to organize a conference in Vienna in February 2014 as confirmation of their willingness to continue to work together.

The year 2014 will be an important one in the OSCE's activities to combat trafficking in human beings. Efforts need to be continued to ensure that, beyond the 2003 Action Plan, the Addendum adopted in Kyiv produces results, in particular through co-operation with the Partner States, as envisaged henceforth in Chapter V of the Addendum. We would be interested to hear your ideas in this regard, given the European Union's great commitment to combating trafficking, particularly in the Mediterranean Basin.

We know that Ambassador Greminger, Chairperson of the Mediterranean Contact Group, attaches importance to this co-operation, as indicated in his statement at the recent Mediterranean Conference. We have no doubt that he will continue within the framework of the OSCE Chairmanship to promote its continuation and ensure that the combating of trafficking remains on our discussion agenda. We assure him of our support.

Ms. Giammarinaro, 2014 will be an important year as well because you will be leaving the OSCE after four years of intensive work. Ms. Vera Gracheva, one of your devoted colleagues, whose expertise has been well appreciated during the recent negotiations, will also be leaving in a few days. We shall do our utmost to ensure that your work is continued under the best conditions.

In this evolving context, we shall continue to work with your successor in the same spirit based on trust and co-operation with the aim of eradicating trafficking in human beings, a scourge that runs counter to our values.

The candidate countries the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia¹, Montenegro¹ and Serbia¹, the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidate countries Albania and Bosnia and Herzegovina, as well as Moldova, Andorra and San Marino align themselves with this statement.

1 The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.