



EUROPEAN UNION

OSCE 90th Joint FSC - PC meeting Vienna, 21 February 2024

EU Statement on Security and Environment

1. We would like to welcome Minister Dalli and Minister Panayiotou, as well as Secretary General Schmid to today's meeting.
2. At the outset, the European Union is outraged by the death of the Russian opposition politician Alexei Navalny, for which the ultimate responsibility lies with President Putin and the Russian authorities. We express our deepest condolences to his wife, children, family, friends and all those who worked with him for the benefit of their country. Russia must allow an independent and transparent international investigation into circumstances of his sudden death. The EU will spare no efforts to hold Russia's political leadership and authorities to account, in close coordination with our partners. We will revert to this issue in the next PC.
3. Dear Chairs, with regard to the main topic of today's joint meeting, the EU wants to thank you for addressing the crucial topic of security and environment. We also thank the speakers for their impressive and very relevant presentations. Extreme weather events, rising temperatures and sea levels, desertification, water scarcity, threats to biodiversity, environmental pollution and contamination and loss of livelihoods threaten the health and well-being of humanity, and can create the potential for greater migratory movements and displacement, pandemics, social unrest, instability and insecurity. Looking across the OSCE area in the last years, natural disasters have become more prevalent and damaging, be it earthquakes, floods or wildfires.
4. At the same time, we recognise that the human-made aspect of the disaster is also of great concern. This is made abundantly and shamefully clear as we approach the second commemoration of the commencement of Russia's ongoing illegal, unprovoked and unjustifiable war of aggression supported by Belarus against Ukraine, which has brought untold suffering to the people of Ukraine as well as untold destruction to the environment of their homeland and beyond.

5. The environmental consequences of Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine will have long-lasting effects in Ukraine and the wider OSCE region, including in the Black Sea. We are horrified to witness damage to farmlands, water supply and sanitation, to ecosystems, biodiversity and marine habitat and environment, especially those affected by the destruction of the Kakhovka dam in the Kherson region of Ukraine. We are deeply concerned about the far-reaching consequences it may have on energy security and nuclear safety and security, especially for the Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Power Plant, extending beyond the borders of Ukraine. Toxic chemicals in water, soil and air could persist for decades to come.
6. The EU and its Member States will continue to provide long-term support to Ukraine to address the economic and environmental challenges caused by Russia's brutal war of aggression. We have also developed an enhanced policy framework with concrete measures to:
 - strengthen climate and environment informed planning, decision-making and implementation;
 - address the climate and security nexus across EU external action;
 - enhance climate adaptation and mitigation measures in the development of Member States' civilian and military capabilities and infrastructure;
 - as well as reinforce international partnerships and the EU's work within multilateral fora. In this context, we note initiatives such as the "Our Ocean Conference" organized this year in Greece, as an opportunity for fostering collaboration among all relevant actors for the protection of our oceans and maritime security.
7. Climate and environmental considerations are increasingly integrated in all humanitarian interventions in recognition of how conflict, climate change and environmental degradation exacerbate humanitarian needs and vulnerabilities. EU humanitarian aid and the Union Civil Protection Mechanism are at the forefront of the EU's response to extreme weather events and their humanitarian consequences. Through its Disaster Preparedness budget, the EU is supporting targeted preparedness interventions, including anticipatory actions to prepare for and mitigate acute humanitarian impacts before they fully unfold. The EU is also committed to reducing the environmental footprint of EU-funded humanitarian

operations and supports and encourages the efforts of its partners in this regard, especially in relation to more sustainable supply chains.

8. As a result of more frequent and severe weather events, Member States' security and defence capabilities are likely to be called upon more often to support disaster management and humanitarian relief efforts, both within and outside the EU. In addition, we must improve early warning, increase national resilience and ensure that all actors involved in international crisis management can continue to fulfil their mission despite rising temperatures and the effects of environmental degradation. Many countries have recognised these needs and have already developed strategies and concepts for their security and armed forces to respond adequately to such challenges. Further strengthening civil-military coordination and preparedness is critical to ensure a timely and effective response.
9. It is encouraging to see that many international organisations have increased their efforts and focus on environment, climate, security and peace. Complementarity of efforts and avoiding unnecessary duplication of work is crucial.
10. The OSCE with its comprehensive approach to security provides for an ideal platform to facilitate dialogue, share best practices and support co-operation on these issues across all three dimensions. Among its commitments in this field, the OSCE has recognised the importance of enhancing co-operation in the area of environment and security in the OSCE region since environmental degradation, including natural and human-made disasters, could additionally contribute to conflicts.
11. We appreciate the OSCE and OCEEA's commitment to address and alleviate the economic and environmental consequences of Russia's war of aggression, through the implementation of the project "Assessment of environmental impacts of the war against Ukraine and options for remediation". We welcome the efforts within the OSCE to assist the Ukrainian authorities and citizens to minimise economic and environmental threats to security in coordination with other international partners.
12. Furthermore, we highlight the need to mainstream gender across the climate change, environment, and security nexus. Our responses should be based on thorough analysis and understanding of how different groups of women are affected by climate and conflict, since women already bear a disproportionate

burden from climate change. Women and children living in poverty are up to 14 times more likely to be killed than men by climate-fuelled disasters. Women also account for a significant majority of the people displaced by the impact of climate change.

13. At the same time, ensuring women's full, equal and meaningful representation and leadership in climate governance and decision making remains a priority. As women's participation and leadership is essential for democracy, security, and prosperity, women also play a key role in fighting climate change and environmental degradation. Therefore, empowering women is not just a moral imperative; it is a strategic necessity.
14. In conclusion, the extensive and long-lasting damage to the environment as a result of Russia's illegal, unprovoked and unjustifiable war of aggression against Ukraine is a stark reminder that the security and environment nexus merits the in-depth discussion today and should remain on the upcoming chairpersons' agendas.

Thank you, Chairs.

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

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