



EUROPEAN UNION

OSCE Permanent Council 1448 Vienna, 2 November 2023

EU statement in response to the report by the Director of ODIHR, Matteo Mecacci

1. The European Union warmly welcomes Director Matteo Mecacci and thanks him for his report. Mr. Mecacci, we thank you and your team for your professionalism, integrity, impartiality and dedication in fulfilling the mandate of the ODIHR.
2. We also take this opportunity to express our gratitude to North Macedonia's Chairpersonship and ODIHR for the excellent organisation of the Warsaw Human Dimension Conference (WHDC).
3. We regret that the Russian Federation deliberately blocked the annual mandated Human Dimension Implementation Meeting (HDIM). By boycotting the WHDC, the Russian Federation will not escape responsibility for the war crimes, crimes against humanity and other crimes committed by the Russian Armed Forces in the course of Russia's unprovoked, unjustified and illegal war of aggression against Ukraine.
4. While we underline the unique character of the regular HDIM, we appreciate this opportunity for a comprehensive dialogue, engagement and exchange with civil society and human rights defenders on major human rights challenges and developments across the OSCE region. Many representatives of civil society organisations took great risks to make their voices heard. We pay tribute to their efforts.
5. Now more than ever, we need ODIHR to support OSCE participating States in promoting human rights, democracy, rule of law and tolerance and non-discrimination. The EU will continue to stand with human rights defenders

and to speak out against the shrinking space for civil society in many parts of the OSCE region.

6. We call on all participating States to further strengthen their engagement with ODIHR in implementing our human rights commitments, a core component of the OSCE's comprehensive concept of security.
7. The EU continues to call on participating States to respect and support ODIHR's mandate, and ensure that ODIHR is adequately resourced and staffed in order to carry out its vital work.

Director Mecacci,

8. We could not agree more with your reflections on ODIHR and its mission. It is all about the people: both the highly committed professionals whose everyday engagement adds to making the OSCE human dimension stronger and all those human rights defenders, government representatives and international partners who have been engaged by ODIHR in dialogues to address security challenges.
9. We express our thanks for ODIHR's technical assistance to the expert missions deployed under the Moscow Mechanism so far. The expert reports helped to establish the facts surrounding the violations of international human rights law (IHRL) and international humanitarian law (IHL) in Ukraine as a consequence of Russia's war of aggression, including the forcible transfer and/or deportation of Ukrainian children, as well as the dire human rights situation in Russia and Belarus, respectively.
10. We also highly appreciate ODIHR's documentation of the most serious violations of IHRL and IHL standards through the *Ukraine Human Rights Monitoring Initiative*. We thank for the *Third Interim Report on Reported Violations of International Humanitarian Law and International Human Rights Law*, which monitors, among other issues, the forcible transfers and deportations of Ukrainian civilians, including children, to Russia or/and within Ukraine's temporarily and illegally occupied territories by Russia. Participants at the WHDC were clear in calling on the OSCE to continue

monitoring and documenting Russia's violations of international law in Ukraine. We reiterate that there will be no impunity: perpetrators of war crimes, crimes against humanity and other crimes will be held accountable in accordance with international law.

Mr. Director,

11. We welcome the Office's continued efforts to support human rights defenders, as well as its work on torture prevention and freedom of peaceful assembly and association. We value the expert guidance that ODIHR has continued to offer to the participating States on ensuring the rule of law and the independence of the judiciary, respecting human rights and fundamental freedoms, strengthening democratic institutions, increasing political participation of women and persons in vulnerable situations, such as Roma and Sinti, as well as on ensuring inclusive and diverse societies by promoting tolerance and combating all forms of discrimination, including by preventing and combating hate crimes and promoting gender equality.

12. We commend ODIHR on its election observation efforts throughout 2023, with 17 missions deployed across the OSCE region, continuing to set the highest international standards in election observation. We remain committed to following up on ODIHR's electoral recommendations. We highly value ODIHR's large body of assistance programmes, ranging from legislative reviews to reform processes, underscoring its ability to meaningfully deliver on its comprehensive mandate, exercised in a transparent and impartial manner.

13. Mr. Director, we wish you and the entire ODIHR team continued success in all your future endeavours.

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

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