



EUROPEAN UNION

26th Meeting of the OSCE Ministerial Council Bratislava,

5-6 December 2019

EU Closing Statement

It is with deep gratitude that the European Union thank Minister Miroslav Lajčák, Ambassador Radomír Boháč and the Slovak chairmanship team, in both Vienna and Bratislava, for their excellent organisation during this Ministerial Council as well as their work throughout the year.

We warmly welcome the incoming chairmanship, Albania, and wish you every success for 2020. We are grateful to Sweden and Poland for taking on the responsibility of the chairmanship for 2021 and 2022. You can count on our full support. The fact that we have the three upcoming chairmanships settled serves well the continuity of the work of the OSCE. We reiterate our full support for OSCE values and principles and are confident that the next three Chairmanships will be guided by these in the best interests of the Organization and its participating States.

Regarding the outcome of the Bratislava Ministerial Council, it is deeply disappointing that we did not manage to adopt decisions and declarations covering all three dimensions. Also, we deeply regret that again this year we could not find an agreement for the political declaration.

We appreciate the continued focus the Chairmanship has placed on Ukraine – the personal engagement of Chairperson-in-Office, Foreign Minister Lajčák, his four visits undertaken including in the conflict zone and the efforts placed on humanitarian aspects of the conflict. However, we deeply regret that we could not find an agreement on the Declaration “on the OSCE efforts towards peace in and around Ukraine”.

We welcome the recent positive developments on the ground in Ukraine and the continued international diplomatic efforts within the Trilateral Contact Group and the Normandy format.

We hope that the N4 summit on Monday will constitute a significant step towards the peaceful resolution of the conflict. We strongly support the OSCE's role and its efforts to facilitate the full implementation of the Minsk agreements. We call for the SMM's full, safe and unhindered access throughout Ukraine including Crimea and along the Ukraine-Russia state border. We also call on the sides to work effectively to fully implement the Minsk agreements and to re-establish full Ukrainian control of its internationally recognised borders. We reiterate our strong condemnation of the clear violation of Ukrainian sovereignty and territorial integrity by acts of aggression by the Russian armed forces since February 2014 and the illegal annexation of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol to the Russian Federation, which we will not recognise.

The resolution of the protracted conflicts in Georgia and the Republic of Moldova and of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict remains a priority for the European Union and we will continue to do the best we can to contribute, in close cooperation with the incoming Albanian CiO and our partners, towards progress and solutions in line with the OSCE principles. We welcome today's Ministerial Statement on the negotiations on the Transnistrian settlement process in the 5+2 format. We welcome the statement by the OSCE Minsk Group Co-Chairs. We regret that it was not possible to adopt a statement on the conflict in Georgia.

We deeply regret that consensus on the Declaration on the implementation and modernisation of the Vienna Document could not be reached. It is vital to modernise our OSCE politico-military toolbox, most notably the Vienna Document, in order to increase military stability, transparency and predictability. We remain convinced that this would bring greater long-term security for all participating States. We reiterate the need to work towards creating an environment conducive to reinvigorating Conventional Arms Control and CSBMs. We also continue to value the Structured Dialogue as a meaningful, transparent, inclusive, state-owned and state-driven process for in-depth exchanges on the current and future challenges and risks to security in the OSCE area and we actively support it.

We welcome the adoption of the commemorative declaration on the 25th anniversary of the OSCE Code of Conduct and the recommitment of all the participating States to its full and faithful implementation. We also welcome the agreement on the declaration commemorating the 25th anniversary of the OSCE principles governing non-proliferation and 15th anniversary of UNSC resolution 1540.

We regret the failure to adopt the Decision on OSCE efforts to Prevent and Counter Terrorism, even though we were so close in agreeing on a substantive text.

We regret that it was not possible to adopt the Draft Decision on Strengthening the OSCE's role in Border Security and Management, which aimed to update the OSCE framework on passenger data exchange systems, to reflect new developments since the last decision adopted on this topic in 2016.

Disappointingly, the Declaration on enhancing efforts to Combat Intolerance and Discrimination and the Decision on Prevention and Eradication of Torture could not be adopted. It was also regretful that the Decision on the right to peaceful assembly could not reach consensus, for reasons that are totally unrelated to the substance of the matter. We call on the Albanian Chairmanship to build on the good work done on these texts and the overwhelming support of delegations for it, so that we can achieve positive results next year.

It is disappointing that the Decision on Preventing and Combatting Human Trafficking also failed to gather the necessary consensus.

We welcome the decision on renaming the Contact Group with the Asian Partners and the Mediterranean Partners for Co-operation to "OSCE Asian Partners for Co-operation Group" and "OSCE Mediterranean Partners for Co-operation Group" respectively. This renaming is an affirmation about the importance of the cooperation with our Partners and we regret that the commemorative declaration on the Asian OSCE Partnership could not be adopted.

We are deeply disappointed that some participating States had difficulty in accepting the inclusion of internationally agreed language on gender and human rights.

The EU appreciates the active participation of civil society organisations in the parallel conference of two days ago. Civil society makes fundamental, multi-faceted contributions to the cause of peace and security and we are deeply worried by the challenges and the restrictions it is facing in many parts of the OSCE region, as well as by the crackdowns on human rights and fundamental freedoms.

The EU reiterates its firm support for the OSCE autonomous institutions, the OSCE field missions and the Secretariat. We recall our strong appreciation for the work of ODIHR, the Representative of Freedom of the Media and the HCNM and our unwavering support for their mandates.

We reaffirm the importance we attach to our cooperation on economic and environmental issues as an important element of the OSCE's comprehensive approach to security. We therefore regret that there was no agreement on a text on digitalization and on a Decision for

Promoting Energy Cooperation, which would take care of the concerns of all participating States. We also deeply regret that, in the context of global efforts to foster sustainable development and combat climate change, in particular the 2030 Agenda and the Paris Agreement, consensus could not be found on a text dealing with transnational organised crime which damages the environment. Negotiations on this text should resume as soon as possible. We are not being responsible as a security Organization, if we are not able to produce in a Ministerial Council a reference to one of the major long-term security concerns we face – namely the environment.

Again, we thank the current chairmanship of the Slovak Republic for a well-conducted Ministerial Council and for its efforts throughout the Chairmanship. It has been a pleasure to work with this professional team and we wish the upcoming chairmanship of Albania all the success. We assure you of our full support. Finally, we look forward to our continued fruitful cooperation with the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly.

I request that this statement be attached to the journal of today's meeting.

The Candidate Countries REPUBLIC of NORTH MACEDONIA* and MONTENEGRO*, and the EFTA country ICELAND, member of the European Economic Area, as well as UKRAINE, the REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA and GEORGIA align themselves with this statement.

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