



EUROPEAN UNION

OSCE Permanent Council No. 1276 Vienna, 23 July 2020

EU Statement in response to the Chair of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe, Alternate Minister of Foreign Affairs of Greece, H.E. Mr. Miltiadis Varvitsiotis,

The European Union warmly welcomes to the Permanent Council the Chair of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe, Alternate Minister of Foreign Affairs of Greece, H.E. Mr Miltiadis Varvitsiotis. We have listened with interest to your priorities and planned events and we thank you for your presentation.

Cooperation between the EU and the Council of Europe is longstanding and it is based on our shared values of human rights, democracy and rule of law. Our strategic partnership aims at ensuring coherence and complementarity between the two organisations. Our relationship remains solid and represents a touchstone for the protection of human rights in a vast area of the world. We welcome that the main event of the Greek Chairmanship is dedicated to the 70th anniversary of the European Convention on Human Rights, and in this context we reaffirm our commitment to the EU's accession to the Convention, with a view to reinforcing the common values of the Union and enhancing the coherence of human rights protection in Europe.

Your Excellency,

Your country assumed the Chairmanship during unprecedented circumstances posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, which exacerbated the pre-existing multiple challenges to security, peace and democracy. As one of the oldest European institutions, the Council of Europe sets the framework in the field of human rights and rule of law, having an impact beyond Europe with many countries which are not members of the Council of Europe signing up to its conventions system.

We welcome the focus of the Greek Chairmanship on upholding democracy, the rule of law and human rights during the COVID-19 pandemic. The European Union has repeatedly underlined that the current efforts and measures in response to the global crisis should not have adverse long-term implications on the enjoyment of human rights. We echo the appeals made earlier this year by the OSCE Albanian Chairmanship, Secretary General and OSCE autonomous institutions that all relevant measures should be necessary, proportionate, temporary and in compliance with the rule of law and international commitments. We also support the important role of the Council of Europe in ensuring that member States' responses to the pandemic fully respect our shared norms and values and are based on human rights standards. This is a time for solidarity and coordination in multilateral fora is much needed. We welcome the stance taken by both the OSCE and its institutions and the Council of Europe in supporting the participating States, and Member States respectively, in upholding democracy, human rights and rule of law during these unprecedented and challenging times. We count on the continued cooperation between the two organisations in this regard.

While being organisations of different nature, the OSCE and the Council of Europe have a common goal: the promotion of peace, stability and security on the basis of democracy, rule of law and respect for human rights in Europe and beyond. For both the Council of Europe and the OSCE, the implementation of existing obligations and commitments by all members and participating States is essential and a continuing challenge. The judgements of the European Court of Human Rights must be executed.

The cooperation between the OSCE and the Council of Europe should be based on using each other's comparative advantages and building synergies, whilst fully respecting mandates, and minimising duplication. We welcome the continuous dialogue and practical cooperation in the four priority areas identified: the fight against terrorism, combatting trafficking in human beings, promoting tolerance and non-discrimination and the protection of rights of persons belonging to national minorities. In addition, co-operation could be further continued or pursued in other areas such as torture prevention, opposing the death penalty, media freedom, including safety of journalists, combating and eliminating violence against women and girls, cultural heritage or human rights education, moreover since "Education and Democratic Culture in a digital era" features among the priorities of your Chairmanship.

Election observation and assistance in ensuring that electoral systems meet international standards are extremely important areas for both organisations. We believe that such

activities and assistance are enhanced when the OSCE/ODIHR, the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe and the European Parliament work in partnership. We encourage continued cooperation and coordination, in particular during these challenging times.

We appreciate the well-established cooperation between ODIHR and the Venice Commission in presenting legal reviews or in elaborating common guidelines on specific topics, as well as the close cooperation between the HCNM and the Venice Commission.

We thank both Albanian OSCE Chairmanship and the Greek Chairmanship of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe for their efforts invested in keeping both organisations functioning, close to the States and their citizens, during these challenging times. We wish you, Your Excellency, every success in the exercise of your mandate during the difficult time ahead of us.

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

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