



EUROPEAN UNION

OSCE Permanent Council No. 1398 Vienna, 7 November 2022

EU Statement in response to the report by the Coordinator of OSCE Economic and Environmental Activities Ambassador Igli Hasani

1. The European Union warmly welcomes the Coordinator of OSCE Economic and Environmental Activities, Ambassador Igli Hasani, to the Permanent Council and thanks him for his report. Ambassador Hasani, your remarks have very well illustrated the significance of economic and environmental issues for the stability and security of the OSCE area and its citizens. This year we commemorated the 30th anniversary of the Economic and Environmental Forum, as well as the 25th anniversary of the establishment of the position of Co-ordinator of OSCE Economic and Environmental Activities. The EU remains fully committed to advancing the agenda of the second dimension and to engage in economic and environmental co-operation as a tool for confidence building and conflict prevention, in line with OSCE values and international commitments and the Organisation's comprehensive concept of security.
2. It is with greatest concern that we continue to witness the devastating impact of Russia's unprovoked, unjustified and brutal war of aggression against Ukraine and its people. The environmental damage on the ground inflicted by Russia's war, such as oil spills, infrastructure damage, leakage of hazardous chemicals from exploded or unexploded ammunition and resulting pollution can affect the health of Ukrainian citizens for decades. We should not disregard the regional dimension of environmental damage caused by the ongoing war, including in the Black Sea. This requires urgent action.

3. We welcome your commitment to address and alleviate the economic and environmental consequences of Russia's war, through the implementation of numerous initiatives, such as the newly launched project "*Assessing the environmental impacts of the war against Ukraine and options for remediation*". The OCEEA can play a vital role in Ukraine in strengthening disaster risk management, supporting water management, and contributing to ensuring food security. We appreciate all efforts to assist the Ukrainian authorities and citizens to minimise environmental threats and security risks in coordination with other international partners. It is crucial to contain and restore environmental damage caused by the war and to protect our resilience.
4. At the same time, during a period of unprecedented challenges in the energy sector, we are appalled by the continuing and deliberate attacks on critical energy infrastructure in Ukraine, which shows once more how little Russia cares about the suffering of the Ukrainian people that it causes.
5. In addition, Russia's ongoing war, along with the physical risks from climate change, pose serious threats to the resilience of our energy systems and now, more than ever, we need to act decisively to guarantee our common security. We greatly appreciate your focus on protecting critical energy infrastructure, as well as the support you provide to pS through the extensive use of the OCEEA toolbox to diversify our energy sources. The EU is committed to the global green and just energy transition, increasing energy savings and efficiency to reduce the pressure on prices, boosting the development of renewables and hydrogen, and stepping up energy diplomacy.

Ambassador,

6. We support the importance you have attached in your activities to address climate security in accordance with the Ministerial Decision in Stockholm last year. As you recall, the decision states that the effects of climate change can exacerbate economic challenges and environmental degradation, which may negatively affect prosperity, stability and security in the OSCE area. The EU is convinced that climate change is one of the most significant global challenges

of the 21st century. In this context, we welcome your office's activities to promote good environmental governance, inter alia by supporting the multi-stakeholder approach of the Aarhus Centres, and to address topics such as transboundary water cooperation, disaster risk reduction, biodiversity and climate change, especially in Central Asia, the South Caucasus and the Western Balkans. In this vein, we welcome the organisation of the High Level Conference on Climate Change scheduled to take place in March 2023, which will contribute to putting the Ministerial Decision into practice.

7. We further welcome your focus on the fight against corruption and its linkage to organised crime, as well as on the role of the media, private sector and civil society. In this regard, we are grateful for the OCEEA's increasing cooperation with the government of the Republic of Moldova on anti-corruption efforts, particularly within the framework of the *Moldova Support Platform Initiative* and welcome the support you provide to the Moldovan authorities, also in mitigating some of the challenges stemming from Russia's war against Ukraine.
8. We welcome the OCEEA's active involvement in the Secretary General's initiative for a response to the security challenges resulting from the situation in Afghanistan ("RIAOR"). The European Union is convinced that the OSCE and the OCEEA in cooperation with Central Asian participating States can make a valuable contribution to the long-term stability and prosperity of the region.
9. We appreciate your work on connectivity and on enhancing regional cooperation and fostering sustainability. At the same time, we appreciate your attention to the potential of young people to contribute to economic, social and political development and we welcome initiatives to boost youth digital skills, while strengthening their resilience towards organised crime, corruption and drug use.
10. We further appreciate the launch of new initiatives on women's economic empowerment, and organising the 2022 Economic and Environmental Dimension Implementation Meeting on this topic. We welcome your commitment to gender equality and thus inclusive societies through full and

comprehensive gender-mainstreaming across all activities of the Office. The economic empowerment of women is key in all democratic societies and we are convinced that incorporating a gender perspective in all OSCE activities is an essential component of a comprehensive approach to security. The EU will remain a leading actor in promoting gender equality across the OSCE region and we will continue to integrate the gender dimension in all our external policies.

11. Joining efforts and coordinating activities among OSCE structures and with other international organisations is key to delivering optimal results. We thank you for focusing on synergies and avoiding duplications and for your active and close cooperation with and continued support to the field operations. We also welcome and support the steps undertaken to enhance the visibility of your activities and projects.

12. In conclusion, we thank you and your team for your valuable work throughout the year. The EU will continue to support your work and send a clear message that against the backdrop of Russia's war against Ukraine, we are now more committed than ever to advance the work of the second dimension to achieve comprehensive security. We look forward to continuing our excellent cooperation.

The Candidate Countries NORTH MACEDONIA*, MONTENEGRO*, ALBANIA*, UKRAINE, and the REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA, the Potential Candidate Countries BOSNIA and HERZEGOVINA* and GEORGIA, and the EFTA countries ICELAND, LIECHTENSTEIN and NORWAY, 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.