



EUROPEAN UNION

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EU Statement on the review of OSCE Cooperation with Mediterranean Partners

Mr. Chairperson, as reflected in the Helsinki Final Act, security in the Mediterranean region is closely linked to security in Europe. The European Union welcomes the initiative taken by the Albanian Chairmanship in organizing this first ever Permanent Council meeting dedicated to the OSCE's Cooperation with the Mediterranean Partners. The complex situation unfolding in the Mediterranean at this critical time of the pandemic is exacerbating threats and challenges that spill over into the OSCE area, across all three dimensions of security. The latest developments represent another evidence of the inextricable linkage between the Mediterranean region and the security of the OSCE region.

In the 2018 Milan Ministerial Declaration on Security and Cooperation in the Mediterranean, the participating States agreed to intensify the OSCE's practical cooperation with the Mediterranean Partners. The momentum created by this Ministerial Declaration was also reflected in the Bratislava Ministerial Meeting in 2019 where the Mediterranean Group was officially given its current name of "OSCE Group of Mediterranean Partners for Cooperation". This change should not be understood as a mere "cosmetic fix", but rather as a positive step in the right direction and as a testament of the OSCE's determination to enhance its cooperation with the Mediterranean Partners.

We would like to commend the Swedish Chairmanship of the Group of Mediterranean Partners for Cooperation on its able leadership this year, during which we have had valuable exchanges of views and effective cooperation on the implementation of projects. The thematic meetings and the Mediterranean Conference, which was held last week, served as an opportunity to explore areas for further cooperation with our Mediterranean Partners, particularly in the fields of women's economic empowerment, combating human trafficking, youth engagement in countering violent extremism, and environmental protection. The Mediterranean Conference, with extraordinary high-level participation, included an interesting session on the impact of Covid-19 on the security of the region. It was also noticeable how a growing awareness of the nexus between climate change and security emerged. Throughout these meetings, the European Union continued to encourage the OSCE's engagement with our Mediterranean Partners, particularly on Women, Peace and Security and Youth.

In this regard, the European Union has repeatedly expressed its strong will to implement the United Nations Security Council Resolutions 1325 and 2250 which, respectively, establish the relations between women and youth with peace and security. We need to continue our joint and cross-dimensional efforts to prevent and counter transnational threats with and for youth and we have to work together with our Mediterranean Partners to enhance women's comprehensive contribution to sustainable peace and security in the Mediterranean region and in the OSCE area. At the same time, the European Union wishes the support of its Partners in the fight against trafficking of human beings based on a humanitarian right-based and victim-centered approach. In this respect, the contribution of the Office of the Special Representative and Coordinator for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings is noteworthy.

Mr Chairperson, a significant number of extra-budgetary projects of interest to the OSCE's Mediterranean Partners are being implemented by the OSCE Secretariat and ODIHR, with the support of EU Member States. We are proud to say, that with a budget of over four million euros, they cover areas such as preventing and combating trafficking in human beings, training of law enforcement officials to combat cross-border threats and improve border security and training on the role of information and

communication technology in the context of regional and international security for Mediterranean participating States and Partners for Cooperation.

In conclusion, the EU thanks the Albanian Chairmanship for its decision to dedicate a PC meeting to Mediterranean issues. We look forward to continue our discussions with our Mediterranean Partners during the upcoming OSCE Chairmanships. Security can only be built around cooperation. We therefore also welcome the progress that the Group of Mediterranean Partners for Cooperation has made this year. In this regard, we would like to thank the Swedish Chair for its excellent work carried out in particularly difficult circumstances. At the same time, we wish the incoming Polish Chair every success.

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 and LIECHTENSTEIN, members of the European Economic Area, as well as UKRAINE, 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.