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## **STATEMENT BY THE EUROPEAN UNION AT THE 1339th MEETING OF THE OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

11 October 2021

### **On the statement by the Co-Chairs of the OSCE Minsk Group**

The European Union welcomes the statement by the Co-Chairs of the OSCE Minsk Group issued on 8 October as a continuation of the dynamic initiated in New York on 23 September at the meeting between the Ministers for Foreign Affairs of Armenia and Azerbaijan under the aegis of the three Co-Chairs on the margins of the 76th session of the United Nations General Assembly.

It applauds the continuation of regular and substantive dialogue by the Co-Chairs with the representatives of the International Committee of the Red Cross, which illustrates the importance of the activities of international humanitarian organizations in the region. Like the Co-Chairs, it stresses the need to ensure unobstructed access by these organizations. It also welcomes the release by Azerbaijan of a further Armenian soldier and recalls that the release of prisoners of war and other detainees, which needs to be completed, is an important humanitarian gesture that will help de-escalate tensions and re-establish mutual trust. The European Union also continues to call for progress in humanitarian demining through the provision of new minefield maps.

It reiterates its appeal to the parties to renew their commitment to the peace process by way of direct dialogue with a view to enhancing security, stability and prosperity in the region. In that regard, it is gratified to note the positive evaluation by the Co-Chairs of the Minsk Group of the statements by the President of Azerbaijan and the Prime Minister of Armenia, who expressed their agreement in principle to the organization of a bilateral meeting under the auspices of the Co-Chairs.

With the situation on the ground largely stabilized, the European Union is concerned at the reports of 9 October of civilian and military casualties on the line of contact in Nagorno-Karabakh and on the section of the State border between Armenia and Azerbaijan at Yeraskh. It continues to appeal to the parties to respect commitments undertaken and to demonstrate the utmost restraint in words and deeds. It urges them to take all necessary measures to prevent any risk of escalation and commit themselves again to deal sincerely with the most urgent issues. It remains willing to provide its expertise, if the parties so wish, and to support the implementation of confidence-building measures.

The European Union will continue to promote a lasting and comprehensive settlement to the conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh and reiterates its full support for the mediation format of the Minsk Group and its Co-Chairs as a means of achieving a final settlement and of finding comprehensive solutions to all the remaining problems linked to or resulting from the conflict, in accordance with the mandate of the Co-Chairs. It is willing to contribute to this, notably through the European Union Special Representative for the South Caucasus, Toivo Klaar, and remains for its part fully committed to efforts aimed at establishing lasting peace and promoting prosperous development in the region, which it would welcome. It also

reaffirms its support for the Personal Representative of the Chairperson-in-Office and his team, whose work is of vital importance to the Co-Chairs of the Minsk Group.

The candidate countries the Republic of North Macedonia<sup>1</sup>, Montenegro<sup>1</sup> and Albania<sup>1</sup>, the country of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidate Bosnia and Herzegovina, the European Free Trade Association countries and members of the European Economic Area Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway, as well as Andorra and San Marino, align themselves with this statement.

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