



## EUROPEAN UNION

### OSCE Permanent Council 1409 Vienna, 2 February 2023

#### **EU Statement on the further deterioration of the human rights situation in Russia**

1. While Russia continues its brutal, unjustified and illegal war of aggression against its peaceful neighbour Ukraine, the systematic clampdown on all remnants of democracy in Russia is carried out in parallel by the state authorities. This clampdown started years before Russia's illegal full-scale invasion of Ukraine and has accelerated, with years of internal repression preceding external aggression, as last September's report under the Moscow Mechanism confirmed.
2. Russian authorities delivered a further blow to civil society last week by issuing a court decision on the ban of the Andrei Sakharov Foundation, now forming part of the "undesirable organisation" list, increasing pressure on the affiliated "Sakharov Centre", as well as by dissolving the "Moscow Helsinki Group", the oldest human rights organisation in Russia. We echo ODIHR's statement that the "decision (...) is contrary to the commitments made by all OSCE countries to respect the freedom to form and join associations".
3. We also strongly condemn the decision by the Russian authorities to designate the independent media outlet Meduza as an "undesirable organisation". It shows that it is not enough for the Russian authorities to spread disinformation and misinformation on Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine, but they also aim at cutting off Russian audiences from access to factual information about the war. We join the Representative on Freedom of the Media in her call on the Russian authorities to repeal their decision and stop intimidation and harassment of media. Apart from Meduza, it concerns the similarly outlawed investigative media portals Proekt, iStories, The Insider and Bellingcat.

4. We urge the Russian authorities to reverse the current legislation on the so-called “undesirable organisations” and “foreign agents”, which severely restricts freedoms of association and opinion, and contravenes Russia’s international obligations. We call on the Russian authorities to unconditionally release all those arbitrarily detained and politically-motivated sentenced, including Yuri Dmitriev, Vladimir Kara-Murza, Ilya Yashin, and Alexei Navalny, to name but a few.
5. The European Union stands by the Russian independent journalists, media actors, civil society and human rights defenders inside and outside Russia, who continue to defend human rights and fundamental freedoms in Russia, and oppose authoritarianism and war.

The Candidate Countries NORTH MACEDONIA\*, MONTENEGRO\*, ALBANIA\*, UKRAINE, and the REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA, and the EFTA countries ICELAND and LIECHTENSTEIN align themselves with this statement.

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