



## EUROPEAN UNION

### OSCE Permanent Council 1395 Vienna, 20 October 2022

#### **EU statement in response to the report by the Director of ODIHR, Matteo Mecacci**

1. The European Union warmly welcomes Director Matteo Mecacci and thanks him for the detailed report for the year 2022. We thank you and your team for your professionalism, integrity and impartiality in fulfilling the mandate of ODIHR. We also take this opportunity to express our appreciation to the Polish Chair and ODIHR for the excellent preparation of the Warsaw Human Dimension Conference (WHDC).
2. Since Russia continued to block consensus on the annual Human Dimension Implementation Meeting and, though this format cannot become “the new normal”, we are grateful for this Conference. It offered us an opportunity to exchange with civil society and human rights defenders, many of whom took great risks to have their voices heard, including those who travelled through war-torn Ukraine. The discussions were marked by Russia’s continued unprovoked, unjustified and illegal war of aggression against Ukraine in blatant violation of the UN Charter, international law and principles and commitments in our OSCE founding documents, which we condemn in the strongest terms.
3. Many participants at the Conference deplored the restriction of human rights and fundamental freedoms in many parts of the OSCE region; the increasing pressure faced by human rights defenders, including women human rights defenders, the intimidation and violence against journalists and other media actors, online and offline, as well as intolerance and discrimination. We regret that some delegations chose not to participate in these discussions.

Director Mecacci,

4. We welcome the Office's continued efforts to support human rights defenders, as well as its work on torture prevention and freedom of peaceful assembly and association. We value the expert guidance that ODIHR has continued to offer to the participating States on ensuring the rule of law and the independence of the judiciary, respecting human rights and fundamental freedoms, strengthening democratic institutions, increasing political participation of women and persons in vulnerable situations, such as Roma and Sinti, as well as on ensuring inclusive and diverse societies by promoting tolerance and combating all forms of discrimination, including by preventing and combating hate crimes and promoting gender equality.
5. We commend ODIHR on its election observation efforts throughout the past year, with 14 missions deployed across the OSCE region, continuing to set the highest international standards in election observation. We remain committed to following up on ODIHR's electoral recommendations. We highly value ODIHR's large body of assistance programs, reaching from legislative reviews to reform processes, underscoring its ability to meaningfully deliver on its comprehensive mandate, exercised in a transparent and impartial manner.
6. We express our thanks for ODIHR's technical assistance to the recent expert missions deployed under the Moscow Mechanism. We also highly appreciate ODIHR's documentation of the most serious violations of international human rights and humanitarian law standards through the *Ukraine Human Rights Monitoring Initiative*, which was operational from day one of Russia's illegal war of aggression against Ukraine. We look forward to the follow up report by the end of this year. Participants at the WHDC were clear in calling on the OSCE to continue monitoring and documenting Russia's violations of international law in Ukraine. We reiterate that there will be no impunity: perpetrators of war crimes, crimes against humanity and other atrocity crimes will be held accountable.
7. The EU will continue to stand with human rights defenders and to speak out against the shrinking space for civil society across many parts of the OSCE region. We urge all participating States to further strengthen their engagement with ODIHR in

implementing our human rights commitments, a core component of the OSCE's comprehensive concept of security. ODIHR must be adequately staffed and resourced in order to carry out its vital work in accordance with its mandate, and we urge all participating States to ensure that the Office receives the necessary resources.

The Candidate Countries REPUBLIC of NORTH MACEDONIA\*, MONTENEGRO\*, ALBANIA\*, UKRAINE and REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA, the Potential Candidate Countries BOSNIA and HERZEGOVINA\* and GEORGIA, the EFTA country ICELAND, member of the European Economic Area, as well as ANDORRA, MONACO and SAN MARINO align themselves with this statement.

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