



## EUROPEAN UNION

### **OSCE Permanent Council No. 1288 Vienna, 5 November 2020**

#### **EU Statement in response to the report by the Coordinator of OSCE Economic and Environmental Activities Amb. Vuk Žugić**

The European Union warmly welcomes the Coordinator of OSCE Economic and Environmental Activities, Amb. Vuk Žugić, to the Permanent Council and thanks him for his report. Ambassador Žugić, we assure you of our continued support for a strong OSCE engagement in the Economic and Environmental Dimension as an integral part of the Organisation's comprehensive approach to security.

We welcome your vision of economic and environmental co-operation as a tool for confidence building and conflict prevention without compromising on OSCE values and international commitments. We also welcome your efforts to further align OSCE activities with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Noting the necessary postponement of a number of your planned activities, we commend the flexibility of your team with regard to the current challenging circumstances and we welcome the organization of the Webinars Series, in particular on coping and recovering from the severe economic consequences of the Covid-19 pandemic. These interesting and informative online events allow a broader audience to improve understanding of common challenges in the Economic and Environmental Dimension.

We value your work, including through extra-budgetary projects, on strengthening good governance, combatting corruption, including the issues of asset recovery, money laundering and financing of terrorism, which are crucial to improve the economic environment, and so contribute to stability and security across the OSCE. We hope to reach consensus on the respective draft decision for adoption in Tirana.

We welcome the focus of your Office on multifaceted issues such as digital transformation and connectivity, in its broad understanding, and we are looking forward to continue discussing the opportunities arising from new technologies and interconnected societies, including those affecting the environment.

We equally appreciate your focus on addressing the security implications of environmental challenges and climate change. In this context, we welcome your Office's activities on enhancing transboundary integrated water management and promotion of good environmental governance, inter alia by supporting the multi-stakeholder approach of Aarhus Centres. Strengthening our commitments in a ministerial text that will stress the urgency of the environmental crisis is of high importance.

The incorporation of a gender perspective in all OSCE activities is an essential component of the OSCE's comprehensive approach to security – and of particular importance to the EU. Therefore, we welcome your commitment to gender equality through full and comprehensive mainstreaming of gender across the activities of the Office as well as your projects on women's economic empowerment.

We thank you for focusing on synergies and avoiding duplications. Joining efforts and coordinating activities among OSCE structures and with other international organisations is key to delivering better results. We encourage you to continue in this way. We equally attach great importance to your active and close cooperation with the field operations and thank you for your continued support to them.

We welcome the steps undertaken by your Office in order to improve its visibility, including the revitalization of the OCEEA webpage and the progress on the confluence platform. We would like to stress our support in continuing this work also with regard to the projects your Office is implementing.

In conclusion, we thank you and your team for your valuable work throughout the year and in supporting the Chair's efforts in the negotiations of the draft ministerial decisions in the second dimension. We are looking forward to continuing our good cooperation.

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, LIECHTENSTEIN and NORWAY, members of the European Economic Area, as well as UKRAINE, the REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA, 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.