



## EUROPEAN UNION

### **OSCE Permanent Council No. 1376 Vienna, 2 June 2022**

#### **EU Statement in response to the report of the Head of the OSCE Centre in Ashgabat, Ambassador John MacGregor**

1. The European Union warmly welcomes the Head of the OSCE Centre in Ashgabat, Ambassador John MacGregor, to the PC and thanks him for his comprehensive and insightful report.
2. We appreciate the Centre's activities, especially against the backdrop of Russia's premeditated, unprovoked, unjustified and illegal war of aggression against Ukraine, which endangers the collective security and stability in the OSCE region and has significant consequences also for the economies of Central Asian countries.
3. We appreciate Turkmenistan's active engagement with the Centre whose work remains key in promoting and facilitating the implementation by Turkmenistan of all its OSCE related commitments. We welcome the Centre's enhanced cooperation with the host country, as well as with the EU Delegation in Turkmenistan and several UN agencies, in planning and implementing programmatic activities.
4. In the first dimension, we support the work on strengthening border service capacities and developing trans-border cooperation, with a strong regional focus, including with the OSCE Border Management Staff College and in the Caspian Sea. We welcome the continued work in addressing Violent Extremism and Radicalization that Lead to Terrorism, as well as enhancing cyber security, while promoting and protecting human rights and fundamental freedoms. The Centre not only hosted online meetings and workshops for national

stakeholders, instructors and law enforcement officers, but also helped establish a Cyber Security Centre of Excellence at one of the higher educational schools in Ashgabat.

5. In the second dimension, we encourage the Centre to continue to focus on improving good governance, including good environmental governance, which will enhance sustainable development and economic growth. We support continued work on preventing and combating corruption, implementing the Aarhus Convention, improving energy security and assisting the host country in aligning its legislation on anti-money laundering and countering-financing of terrorism (AML/CFT) with the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) standards and development of anti-corruption regulations.
6. The improvement of the rule of law and respect for human rights are essential elements of the EU-Turkmenistan relationship. Despite some limited progress, the EU remains concerned about the serious shortcomings in human rights and fundamental freedoms protection in Turkmenistan and the lack of transparency and accountability in these areas, including detention conditions and the right to a fair and public process. We continue to urge enhanced work in the third dimension, in promoting and supporting the implementation of OSCE principles and commitments in the area of human rights and fundamental freedoms, as well as in support of genuine civil society. In this context, we appreciate the Centre's collaboration with national stakeholders.
7. We continue to consider work in the area of penitentiary reform, including with the view to ensuring international standards related to prisoners' rights, to be a priority. We welcome the support of the Centre to the improvement of the penitentiary system and encourage it to continue its visits to detention facilities. The EU stresses the importance of Turkmenistan's ratification of the Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture and of the International Convention for the Protection of all Persons from Enforced Disappearances as important steps towards eradication of these practices. We remain concerned by the continued enforced disappearance of many people in Turkmenistan's prisons and we reiterate our call on the national authorities to immediately and effectively eradicate this heinous violation of human rights. The EU is also

concerned about the recently reported restrictions of individual rights of women, including through limitations on women dress code.

8. We welcome that the Centre stepped up its activities in the area of media development and we encourage a close coordination with the RFoM. We particularly applaud the work to support the modernisation of media legislation and the implementation of the provisions of the National Human Rights Action Plan (NHRAP) for 2021-2025 related to the freedom of the media and freedom of expression. We welcome continued work on supporting the Office of the Ombudsperson in the implementation of the NHRAP 2021-2025, as well as the Centre's efforts to offer educational programs in the field of human rights and to help combating trafficking in human beings. We welcome that gender equality and mainstreaming remain high on the agenda and appreciate the adjustments made in light of the COVID-19 pandemic.
9. Turkmenistan is an important partner in the EU's relations with Central Asia, including in the implementation of the EU Strategy for Central Asia and the Global Gateway Initiative, which provide valuable opportunities to forge a strong and durable partnership with the region.
10. In conclusion, allow me to express our appreciation for the Centre's work and to wish Ambassador John MacGregor and his team every success.

The Candidate Countries REPUBLIC of NORTH MACEDONIA\*, MONTENEGRO\* and ALBANIA\*, the Country of the Stabilisation and Association Process and Potential Candidate BOSNIA and HERZEGOVINA, and the EFTA countries ICELAND and LIECHTENSTEIN, as well as UKRAINE align themselves with this statement.

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