



## EUROPEAN UNION

### OSCE Permanent Council No. 1265 Vienna,

### **EU Statement on the Report by the Head of the OSCE Programme Office in Nur-Sultan, Amb. Szabó**

The European Union and its Member States warmly welcome Ambassador Szabó back to the Permanent Council and thank him for his comprehensive report.

After more than twenty years of activities of the OSCE Programme Office, we express our appreciation for the continued contribution of the Programme Office in advancing Kazakhstan's development in all three dimensions and the importance we attach to it. We commend the Kazakh President Tokayev for having established the new consultative entity, the National Council of Public trust. We would welcome a steady involvement of the Programme Office into the body's activities in order to present the OSCE's instruments more visibly to the members of the National Council.

We appreciate that the work carried out by the Programme Office is covering a broad range of topical issues, as well as the continuation of programmes and activities that contribute to advancing the host country's strategic plans as well as to implementing OSCE commitments. We welcome that the Office is undertaking self-evaluation efforts, and we take note that the process of handing over activities to the host country needs further refinement to empower key stakeholders in order to ensure sustainable impact. Regarding the current COVID-19 situation, we appreciate that the Office is readjusting its working method and redirecting funds to combat risks caused by the pandemic (e.g., on an increase in domestic violence).

We take positive note of the regional engagement of the Programme Office in Nur-Sultan, including with other OSCE Field Operations and regional experts (e.g., Training

on Vienna Document 2011 and Seminar on law enforcement and conflict management). We would be interested to hear more about the synergies of co-operation with other international stakeholders, esp. of the UN, and the Programme Office's specific contribution in that regard. We particularly commend the cooperation with the EU Border Management Programme in Central Asia (BOMCA).

We welcome that the Programme Office has continued and strengthened its longstanding cooperation with local partners, including with civil society, media, academia, and business community. We appreciate that the programmatic activities often include a gender perspective and/or lay focus on communicating with youth representatives.

With regards to the re-scoped extra-budgetary project on supporting police reform, we would be interested in which activities have been started and for which target groups, including on the pilot project in Karaganda province.

We appreciate the report's programmatic highlights and the methodological approach chosen: emphasis on police and judicial reforms, strengthening accountability and transparency of governmental institutions as well as rule of law, promoting tolerance in the multi-ethnic and multi-religious society and gender-mainstreaming, using a train-the-trainer-approach and addressing and including youth and civil society.

In the Politico-Military Dimension, we welcome the topical activities within the continued programmatic work, while promoting human rights and fundamental freedoms. Examples are a seminar on the rehabilitation of returning FTF (Foreign Terrorist Fighters), or training on countering trafficking of drugs in the Darkweb. We appreciate activities on digital security, on media freedom online including countering hate speech, defamation etc. while guaranteeing freedom of expression and on regulating of defamation in domestic law.

In the second Dimension, we welcome the Programme Office's continued work on promoting good governance, with a view to combating corruption and money laundering, as well as terrorism financing. We welcome the Office's assistance to the Government's efforts on regional water management, and on improving environmental litigation. The EU supports raising OSCE's profile in promoting environmental issues in particular in Central Asia. We therefore also welcome your efforts to help CAREC

to become a leader on advancing regional approaches on environmental issues including the harmonization of emerging environmental codes.

In the Human Dimension, we commend the Programme Office for continuing the promotion of human rights and fundamental freedoms, the rule of law and the strengthening of democratic institutions as the core of the comprehensive security approach. We welcome continued cooperation with National Human Rights Institutions, with the Ombudsman and the Human Rights Commission under the President. We attach great importance to effective cooperation with civil society. We welcome important work on combating torture and trafficking in human beings as well as on gender-based violence. We are interested in the development of legislation on peaceful assembly and would welcome exchange of national entities with ODIHR on that matter. We would also appreciate information on the follow-up of international election observation mission's findings and conclusions on the latest presidential elections.

On this occasion, we underline the still new EU Strategy on Central Asia focusing on promoting resilience, prosperity and regional cooperation in Central Asia. The implementation of this strategy provides a valuable opportunity for the EU and Central Asia to forge a strong and durable partnership. The promotion and protection of rule of law, human rights and fundamental freedoms, civil society, the rights of women and sustainable development, good governance, among others, must remain at the core of the relations. In the framework of our EU Enhanced Partnership and Cooperation Agreement with Kazakhstan, together with the EU Central Asia Strategy, the European Union stands ready to advance EU-Kazakhstan relations more broadly.

In conclusion, we thank Ambassador Szabó for his report. We thank for his tireless efforts as Head of the Programme Office and we wish him and his able staff well in their work throughout the year.

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 and LIECHTENSTEIN, members of the European Economic Area, as well as UKRAINE, the REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA, ARMENIA and GEORGIA align themselves with this statement.

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