



EUROPEAN UNION

OSCE Permanent Council No. 1277 Vienna, 30 July 2020

EU Statement on the 45th Anniversary of the Helsinki Final Act

45 years ago the Heads of State or Government of 35 States convened in the Finlandia Hall in Helsinki and signed the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe Final Act, generally referred to as the Helsinki Final Act, a seminal moment in the history of this organisation.

The signatories of the Helsinki Final Act envisaged European security and cooperation as being guided by ten fundamental principles, the so-called Helsinki Decalogueⁱ, and expressed their determination to fully respect and apply these principles in all aspects of their mutual relations and cooperation.

Based on the Helsinki Final Act and thanks to the political changes leading to and following the fall of the Berlin Wall and the lifting of the Iron Curtain, the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe saw a period of enthusiasm to build a common European house based on shared values. The CSCE evolved into the OSCE with a set of new instruments and structures to support participating States with the implementation of their commitments.

However, as we mark 45 years of the Helsinki Final Act, we cannot but note with regret the continuing violations of fundamental principles of the Helsinki Decalogue, including the violation of the territorial integrity and sovereignty of participating States.

Some participating States have been consistently questioning the European security order and the OSCE's role in it, as well as challenging past commitments.

The conflict in eastern Ukraine caused by acts of aggression by the Russian armed forces, and the illegal annexation of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol by the Russian Federation which we strongly condemn and do not recognize, continue to pose a severe challenge to European security and have demonstrated the dangerous consequences that follow when international law and fundamental principles of the OSCE are violated. In addition, the protracted conflicts in the Republic of Moldova and in Georgia as well as the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict continue to fragilise peace and stability and can be resolved durably only if the parties involved agree to solve them in line with OSCE principles.

Through the Helsinki Final Act the participating States recognise that respect for the human rights and fundamental freedoms is an essential factor for the peace, justice and well-being necessary to ensure the development of friendly relations and cooperation between States. We continue to see repression on human rights and fundamental freedoms, evidenced by mounting pressure and attacks on human rights defenders, journalists and media actors across the OSCE area. Lasting security cannot be sustained without respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, democracy, and the rule of law. Our OSCE commitments are more relevant than ever in these challenging times and we need to redouble the focus on their implementation.

The Helsinki Final Act also recognises that security in Europe is to be considered in the broader context of security in the world and that European security is closely linked with security in the Mediterranean area. We recognise that this link has become all the more relevant as has our cooperation with our Mediterranean Partners, given the growing range of challenges and opportunities stemming from the Mediterranean region and beyond, as agreed in Milan in 2018. Recent developments within the Mediterranean region have justified this vision in the promotion of security and stability in the Mediterranean region as a whole, acknowledging that it remains at the top of the EU agenda.

The OSCE has also reached out to Asia. Today, ties with the Asian Partners for Cooperation are close and contribute to trust and mutual understanding in accordance with the OSCE's comprehensive and cooperative concept of security stretching from Vancouver to Vladivostok.

OSCE institutions and structures work together to support participating States in the implementation of their commitments. The EU fully supports the role of the OSCE Secretary General, the three autonomous institutions and the field missions. Their strong and flexible mandates play a crucial role in supporting participating States in the implementation of their commitments. They serve us well, and it is the responsibility of all of us to preserve the institutions and their strong mandates, and to ensure the continued full operability of our Organization through the swift appointment of the most able personalities in all leadership positions.

The EU will continue to insist that all participating States implement all OSCE commitments in good faith including by adhering to, and restoring respect for, OSCE core principles contained in the Helsinki Final Act, by holding one another accountable and by refraining from provoking tensions through violations of our common principles and commitments in the OSCE area.

Restoring full respect for OSCE core principles contained in the Helsinki Final Act: this must be to the forefront of our political agenda in order to give true sense and meaning to marking 45 years of the Helsinki Final Act. If we fail in this endeavour, our discussion today would be an empty ritual or an academic discussion. Today, more than ever, we need to go back to the spirit and letter of the principles and commitments enshrined in the Helsinki Final Act. Re-establishing these as the foundation of the European security order means first and foremost restoring respect for the principles and commitments that have been violated. Let this be our first step to fulfil the promise and the vision of the Helsinki Final Act and our common pledge that we together with all participating States renew today.

The Candidate Countries REPUBLIC of NORTH MACEDONIA*, MONTENEGRO* and ALBANIA*, the EFTA countries ICELAND 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 and Albania continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.

ⁱ I- Sovereign equality, respect for the rights inherent in sovereignty; II- Refraining from the threat or use of force; III- Inviolability of frontiers; IV- Territorial integrity of States; V- Peaceful settlement of disputes; VI- Non intervention in internal affairs; VII- Respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, including freedom of thought, conscience, religion or belief; VIII- Equal rights and self-determination of peoples; IX- Cooperation among States; X- Fulfilment in good faith of obligations under international law.