



## EUROPEAN UNION

### OSCE Permanent Council 1407 Vienna, 19 January 2023

#### **EU Statement in response to the Address by Þórdís Kolbrún Reykfjörð Gylfadóttir, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Iceland**

1. The European Union warmly welcomes to the Permanent Council the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Iceland. We strongly support the program of the Icelandic Presidency of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe, including its four priorities.
2. We highly value Iceland's decision to choose as its first priority protecting the core values of democracy, rule of law and human rights, especially now, in the face of Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine. We appreciate the important work of the Council of Europe in supporting Ukraine. We strongly support the re-establishment of the Council's Office in Ukraine, and welcome the adoption of the new Action Plan for Ukraine "Resilience, Recovery and Reconstruction" 2023-2026, as well as the support to the work of the Prosecutor General of Ukraine. It is important to continue focusing on supporting Ukraine through all means possible.
3. In this respect, we welcome the upcoming fourth summit of the Council of Europe to be held in Reykjavik in May this year. The Summit is an important opportunity to unite around our common values and recommit to the defence of human rights, democracy and the rule of law. We agree with you, Madame Minister, that strengthening our common values is particularly important in a time of democratic backsliding and rising authoritarianism in some parts of our region.
4. Due to Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine, the Committee of Ministers decided first to suspend Russia's rights of representation, and later to cease its membership of the Organisation entirely. Russia bears full responsibility for its war of aggression against Ukraine and all its consequences. With its unprovoked and unjustified aggression against

Ukraine, a fellow member State of the Council of Europe, Russia violated the fundamental principles of the CoE Statute, the UN Charter and international law, including OSCE principles and commitments. We regret that Russia has failed to heed our repeated calls to cease its military operations in Ukraine immediately and unconditionally and respect the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine within its internationally recognised borders.

5. Madame Minister, we regret that the Russian people will again suffer from the consequences of their government's actions. As a result of Russia's aggression, Russian citizens no longer benefit from the protections granted by the European Convention on Human Rights. This is highly alarming, as it further worsens the already dire human rights situation in Russia. We reiterate that Russia remains obliged to execute the judgments of the European Court of Human Rights related to the cases brought before it until September 2022. The European Union strongly supports human rights defenders, democratic forces, free media and independent civil society in Russia. We urge Russia to rapidly return to full compliance with international law, including human rights and international humanitarian law.
6. Madame Minister, the EU intends to further strengthen its long-standing cooperation with the Council of Europe, which plays a crucial standard-setting role in the fields of human rights, democracy and the rule of law. The EU reaffirms its commitment to accede to the European Convention on Human Rights, with the objective of reinforcing the common values of the Union and enhancing the coherence of human rights protection in Europe. We also commend the indispensable work of the European Court of Human Rights, and call for the full execution of the Court's Judgments by all CoE Member States. We acknowledge the increasing significance of the ECHR in conflict situations, through its interim measures and judgements in inter-state cases.
7. We welcome the active dialogue and practical cooperation between the OSCE and the Council of Europe. We believe that there is considerable complementarity between the work of both organisations. While we acknowledge the continued relevance of the four identified priority areas, we believe there is scope for further broadening our cooperation, particularly between OSCE field operations and CoE offices on the ground. Safeguarding democratic institutions, the rule of law and human rights, including media freedom, are prerequisites for lasting security and a return to peace on our continent. We should continue to work together to ensure proper working conditions for civil society, whose role in promoting and protecting

human rights and democracy is vital, as well as to combat all forms of gender-based violence. We welcome that these are areas that are well covered by the Icelandic Presidency.

8. In concluding, the EU looks forward to continued close cooperation between the OSCE and the Council of Europe and we wish you, Minister Gylfadottir, every success during your Presidency. The EU also takes the opportunity to thank Ireland as the previous Chair of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe.

The Candidate Countries NORTH MACEDONIA\*, MONTENEGRO\*, ALBANIA\*, UKRAINE, and the REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA, the Potential Candidate Country GEORGIA, as well as ANDORRA and SAN MARINO align themselves with this statement.

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