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Subject:	EU priorities at the OSCE - Council conclusions (20 March 2023)

Delegations will find in the annex the Council conclusions on EU priorities at the OSCE, as approved by the Council at its 3941st meeting held on 20 March 2023.

Council conclusions on EU priorities at the OSCE**Challenges to European Security**

1. By launching and continuing its unprovoked, unjustified and illegal war of aggression against Ukraine, with the complicity of Belarus, Russia flouted the core norms, principles and commitments on which European security is built. These principles are enshrined in the UN Charter and the founding documents of the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), including the Helsinki Final Act and the Charter of Paris. Although Russia has been trying to subvert them for years, including in Georgia in 2008 and in Ukraine in 2014, these principles are neither negotiable nor subject to revision or re-interpretation. Ukraine's security is Europe's security. The European Union will stand unequivocally with Ukraine and its people for as long as it takes.

The OSCE's role for Security in the OSCE area

2. At the OSCE Ministerial Council of December 2022, participating States confirmed that the OSCE remains one of the guardians of the fundamental acts and values governing security in Europe, that it continues to provide a unique platform for comprehensive discussions on security across the three dimensions, and that it retains a large and unique toolbox for conflict prevention and resolution. The fundamental principles and commitments of the Helsinki Final Act and the Paris Charter cannot be properly safeguarded without ending Russia's war of aggression and restoring Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity within its internationally recognised borders.

3. Representing nearly half of its participating States, and contributing about 60% of its financial and human resources, the EU and its Member States are staunch supporters of the OSCE. The EU's Global Strategy for Foreign and Security Policy¹, the Joint Communication on strengthening the EU's contribution to rules-based multilateralism², and the Strategic Compass³ recommend strengthening EU-OSCE cooperation. The EU's support to the OSCE lies in the EU's strong commitment to effective multilateralism, firmly rooted in the respect for the rule of law and international law, including human rights and international humanitarian law. Effective multilateralism based on common rules, and the protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms, democracy and the rule of law, remain the best way to preserve global peace and security.
4. The Council commends the current and previous OSCE Chairpersonships-in-Office for their efforts to lead the organisation in difficult times marked by Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine in breach of the OSCE founding principles and its obstruction of the functioning of the OSCE. In spite of this situation, the OSCE remained committed to its values and continued to deliver important outcomes, such as the invocation of the Moscow Mechanism, the Warsaw Human Dimension Conference 2022, the launch of the Support Programme for Ukraine (SPU), and many other projects. The Council further recognises and supports the efforts of the OSCE, its Secretariat and Secretary General, field missions and autonomous institutions - the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR), the High Commissioner on National Minorities (HCNM), and the Representative on Freedom of the Media (RFoM) - as well as of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, and welcomes the work of the OSCE Border Management Staff College in Dushanbe and the OSCE Academy in Bishkek.

¹https://www.eeas.europa.eu/sites/default/files/eugs_review_web_0.pdf

²https://eeas.europa.eu/sites/default/files/en_strategy_on_strengthening_the_eus_contribution_to_rules-based_multilateralism.pdf

³<https://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-7371-2022-INIT/en/pdf>

5. The Council deplores that the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine (SMM), the Project Co-Ordinator in Ukraine, and the OSCE Observer Mission at the Russian Checkpoints of Gukovo and Donetsk had to be closed due to Russia's refusal to join consensus on the extension of their mandates. The Council reiterates the EU's strong call on Russia to immediately and unconditionally release the three illegally detained OSCE SMM staff members and return the OSCE SMM armoured vehicles to their legitimate owners.
6. The Council deeply regrets that, because of Russia's obstructions, the mandate of the OSCE Mission in Moldova could only be extended for six months instead of the normal one-year period as decided by OSCE participating States at the Ministerial Council in Brussels in 2006. It calls for the mandate of the mission to be extended for the usual period.
7. The Council calls on all OSCE participating States to ensure the timely adoption of the OSCE's budget, with adequate resources, taking into account the rising costs for the organisation, especially in this context of high inflation, to allow the effective functioning of the OSCE across all three dimensions. It is crucial that the autonomous institutions, the Secretariat, and the field missions are all adequately funded in order to fulfil their respective mandates. In the absence of an adequate decision, the Council commends those States that contribute extra-budgetary funds to preserve the OSCE's capability to act. The blocking of the approval process of the OSCE budget for over a year has seriously hampered the operation capacity of the OSCE and its institutions.
8. The Council deeply regrets that, due to Russia's obstructive attitude so far, the OSCE Ministerial Council has not been able to reach a consensus on the Chairpersonship-in-Office for 2024.

9. The Council welcomes the OSCE's continuous support to Ukraine and the establishment of the OSCE Support Programme for Ukraine (SPU) in order to strengthen the resilience of Ukrainian institutions and civil society organisations. The EU and its Member States are major contributors to this extra-budgetary initiative. The Council also welcomes the invocation of the Moscow Mechanism twice in 2022 on violations of international humanitarian and human rights law, war crimes and crimes against humanity committed in the context of Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine. The findings of the two missions reports under the Moscow Mechanism, as well as ODIHR reports, are an essential contribution to the collection and analysis of facts with a view to present them to accountability mechanisms that have, or may have in the future, jurisdiction.

The EU's priorities in the OSCE

10. The Council is committed to safeguarding the OSCE as one of the pillars of the European security order and to ensuring compliance with the Helsinki Final Act, the Paris Charter and other OSCE core principles and commitments. The EU will continue supporting the activities of the OSCE Secretariat, institutions and field operations throughout the OSCE area. At the same time, the EU will actively contribute to the implementation of the OSCE principles and commitments in all three dimensions, including the OSCE's role in early warning, conflict prevention and resolution, restoring peace and security, post-conflict rehabilitation, promoting cooperation, and the Women, Peace and Security agenda. To this end, the EU will:
11. *Continue efforts to restore the OSCE's role for security:*
- Continue promoting support for the rules-based international order based on the UN Charter and the Helsinki Decalogue, in view of the constant violations by the Russian Federation of international law and the OSCE principles and commitments. We regret that constant violations by the Russian Federation of the OSCE commitments and rules make the regular work of the Organization difficult.

- Ensure that the Russia’s war against Ukraine remains in the focus of the OSCE work as long as Russia continues its aggression, which constitutes a direct attack on the European security order, thus undermining European and global security and stability.

12. *Support and strengthen OSCE capacities and field activities across the OSCE area:*

- Continue to use all OSCE tools to address Russia’s aggressions towards other OSCE participating States.
- In view of Russia’s escalating war of aggression against Ukraine, support the OSCE in contributing to efforts to ensure full accountability for gross violations of international law, war crimes and atrocities, and human rights violations.
- Ensure support to Ukraine through the work of the OSCE Secretariat, including through the Support Programme for Ukraine, and the autonomous institutions.
- Keep supporting the OSCE’s role in addressing protracted conflicts in the Southern Caucasus and the Republic of Moldova with the aim of reaching sustainable political solutions, in line with international law and OSCE principles and commitments. The OSCE must continue to be able to offer support to all participating States that require it.
- Focus efforts on ensuring the continuity of OSCE missions and of their mandates, including the extension of the OSCE Mission to the Republic of Moldova beyond June 2023, given these missions’ vital role in the de-escalation of conflict, in capacity building measures and human resources training.
- Work to preserve the OSCE’s role as a platform for dialogue on peace and security, based on the OSCE principles and commitments, and engage with countries across the region on the OSCE’s future contributions to regional security.

- Continue promoting OSCE engagement in the Western Balkans and the Eastern Neighbourhood, in line with respective enlargement priorities where relevant, through the OSCE field missions in the region and through the work of the OSCE Secretariat and institutions, including as regards the rule of law, follow-up on ODIHR election observation recommendations, freedom of expression, media freedom, freedom of religion and belief, the fight against corruption and organised crime.
- Encourage synergies with the OSCE engagement in Central Asia and promote such engagement, with a focus on regional security and resilience, preventing and countering transnational threats, women's and girls' empowerment, addressing climate change, cybersecurity, and the different sectors of sustainable connectivity, as identified in the Global Gateway strategy.
- Continue to engage with the OSCE Mediterranean and Asian Partners for Cooperation, as security in the OSCE region is inseparably linked to that of its neighbours and can be strengthened through dialogue and cooperation in the politico-military, the economic and environmental, as well as the human dimensions, jointly addressing security challenges.

13. ***Ensure the implementation of all OSCE principles and commitments in all three dimensions:***

- Foster political will and good faith in implementing the OSCE's comprehensive toolbox across the full conflict cycle and in all three dimensions. Particular attention will be given to the implementation of the Women, Peace and Security agenda and to combating trafficking in human beings.
- Promote the full implementation of commitments and obligations in the politico-military area. The EU will also cooperate closely with the OSCE in addressing transnational security threats and challenges.

- Make full use of the economic and environmental dimension as a confidence-building tool and as an important instrument to strengthen good governance and well-being of the population.
- Continue to support the OSCE's crucial work to address the environmental degradation/climate change/biodiversity loss nexus and its impact on security as a threat multiplier, including by supporting the participating States in implementing relevant Ministerial Council Decisions, in particular the landmark 2021 Stockholm Decision No. 3/21 on Strengthening co-operation to address the challenges caused by climate change.
- Stress the key importance of the human dimension in the operationalisation of the OSCE's comprehensive concept of security, urging for the full implementation of all Human Dimension commitments by all participating States, in full compliance with human rights law, and for the strengthening of democratic institutions, the rule of law, gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls, and the respect, protection and fulfilment of all human rights, including those of persons belonging to national minorities.
- Continue calling for cross-dimensional cooperation on these topics. Particular attention will be given to the implementation of the Women, Peace and Security agenda, to cooperation with civil society, to the promotion of freedom of expression, both online and offline, media freedom and the safety of journalists, to combating trafficking in human beings and preventing and addressing conflict-related sexual violence. The EU will promote the participation of youth in the OSCE's activities and processes.
- Deepen the cooperation on cyber/ICT security in the Informal Working Group established by Permanent Council Decision 1039, notably through an increased EU engagement on confidence-building measures.

- Continue to support the regular convening of Human Dimension events, including the Human Dimension Implementation Meetings (HDIM), as the main platforms to discuss the situation of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the OSCE area and assess the implementation of the Human Dimension commitments with civil society representatives.

14. *Strengthen the OSCE's effectiveness:*

- Support the proper functioning of the organisation and reflect on ways to counter obstructions and abuse of the rule of consensus.
- Continue using formats such as the EU-OSCE High Level Dialogue and working level meetings to streamline cooperation and look for additional synergies especially at the field level.
- Continue supporting the mandates and the work of the Secretariat and the field missions in the Economic and Environmental Dimension.
- Continue supporting the mandates and work of the autonomous institutions (ODIHR, HCNM, RFoM) and field missions in supporting the implementation of OSCE commitments by participating States, such as the OSCE/ODIHR's comprehensive election-related activities through the exchange of good practices. With a view to contributing to early warning and ensuring effective prevention and sustainable solutions to conflicts, the EU will also continue supporting OSCE/ODIHR's mandate to assist participating States with their human rights obligations, gender equality commitments, and promotion of tolerance and non-discrimination.
- Continue to attach importance to the mandate of the HCNM, in particular on providing early warning and seeking early action with regard to tensions involving persons belonging to national minorities.

- Continue supporting the mandate of the RFOM in observing media developments as part of an early warning function and helping participating States abide by their commitments to freedom of expression and free media, both online and offline. This includes efforts to ensure the safety of journalists.
15. The Council reiterates the EU's commitment to cooperate with the OSCE as a comprehensive and inclusive platform for political and policy dialogue on European, Euro-Atlantic and Eurasian security, and for building trust through restoring security and respect for the OSCE common principles and commitments. The Council reaffirms the EU's commitment to continue supporting the OSCE, politically and financially. EU-OSCE cooperation and dialogue will continue across all possible areas and levels.
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