



EUROPEAN UNION

**23nd Meeting of the OSCE Ministerial Council
Hamburg, 9 December 2016**

EU Closing Statement

We want to start with expressing our deep gratitude to the German Chairmanship for the hospitality we have enjoyed here in Hamburg. Minister Steinmeier, we would like to thank you and your excellent team for the tremendous work you have put into preparing and hosting this Ministerial Council, and for your tireless efforts in taking us through difficult discussions, this week and throughout this year.

For a third year, the Ministerial Council takes place against the bleak backdrop of the crisis in and around Ukraine. Russia's illegal annexation of Crimea and destabilisation of eastern Ukraine continues to violate the principles and commitments, as enshrined notably in the Helsinki Final Act and the Paris Charter, constituting the basis of the European security order. Respect for the fundamental principles and commitments must be restored. We reiterate our strong condemnation of the illegal annexation of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol, which we will not recognise. We reaffirm our unwavering support for Ukrainian sovereignty, independence, unity and territorial integrity within its internationally recognised borders.

We hoped and worked for consensus on a Ministerial Declaration on OSCE action addressing the crisis in around Ukraine and regret consensus was not possible. We recall that only Russia refused to join consensus on the last draft tabled by the Chair.

We reaffirm our strong support for the OSCE's role in the crisis in and around Ukraine. We commend the OSCE's essential and multifaceted contribution to

facilitating the full implementation of the Minsk agreements. We reiterate our support for the essential role of the SMM in advancing the full implementation of Minsk agreements and call for full, safe and unhindered SMM access throughout Ukraine, including ensuring the safety and security for monitors and their equipment. We call on all sides to work effectively and in good spirit to fully implement the Minsk agreements to ensure a sustainable political solution in line with OSCE principles and commitments. Restoring respect for these fundamental principles is crucial. We underline Russia's responsibility in this regard. The reestablishment of full Ukrainian control of the Ukrainian-Russian State border is crucial.

The resolution of the protracted conflicts in the Republic of Moldova, in Georgia and of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict remains a top priority for the European Union. We call on all parties to show the political will necessary to make progress in resolving them in 2017. We reiterate our strong support for the Geneva International Discussions, the negotiations within the "5+2" format and the mediation of the Co-Chairs of the Minsk Group. In this context we welcome today's Ministerial statement confirming our commitment to advance efforts in reaching a settlement of the Transnistrian conflict. In addition, commitments regarding the withdrawal of Russian military forces should be honoured. We welcome the joint statement by the Heads of Delegation of the OSCE Minsk Group Co-Chair countries. We regret that it was not possible to adopt a statement on the conflict in Georgia.

Throughout the year we supported the Chair-in-Office's efforts to strengthen the OSCE capabilities across the conflict cycle. While we regret that no consensus could be reached on a decision on this important topic, we welcome the Chair's report as a strong basis to continue work to this effect.

We are pleased to have found consensus on a decision on migration, even if we would have liked to see a stronger, more substantial text. This sends a strong signal about the importance we attach to addressing the large movements of migrants and refugees and of the complementary role we see for the OSCE in the global efforts led by the UN. We are deeply indebted to Ambassador Claude Wild

for his tremendous and tireless efforts to forge difficult compromises and find language that could find consensus. We also recognise the important issue of protecting the rights of internally displaced persons, also in light of the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants of September 2016 that recognises the very large number of people who are displaced within national borders and the possibility that such persons might seek protection and assistance in other countries as refugees or migrants.

Instruments of military transparency to reduce risks and increase predictability, play an important role in fostering confidence and stability. In this context, we welcome the agreement on the MC declaration celebrating the 20th anniversary of the Lisbon Framework for arms control and reaffirming enduring goals and values of this inspiring document, although we would have wished to see a stronger outcome, as well as the agreement on the MC declaration on SALW and SCA assistance projects, an important area of OSCE's contribution to the stability and security in the OSCE region. We remain committed to the full implementation of the existing commitments in the politico-military area, including the Vienna Document, the Treaty on Open Skies and the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe. Furthermore, given the changes in the security environment as well as technological developments in the military sphere our work on the modernisation of our politico-military instruments in the framework of the OSCE must continue.

This year's numerous and heinous terrorist attacks, in the OSCE area and worldwide, prompted Ministers to once again speak out strongly against the continued threat posed by terrorism and to express solidarity. We welcome that the adopted Declaration emphasizes our commitment to work with civil society in preventing and countering terrorism and to protect human rights as this will make our efforts more effective. Ministers also provided a clear mandate to enhance the use of advance passenger information systems across the OSCE, which should concretely contribute to preventing the movement of terrorists. The OSCE has played a pioneering role in adopting and implementing confidence building measures to address security of and in the use of information and communication

technologies. The Ministerial Decision rightly endorses these efforts and provides a welcome push to continue to address the cyber challenges we all face.

The signal sent from the parallel civil society conference, this year again, on the ongoing or even increasing restrictions on civil society and crackdown in human rights and fundamental freedoms in parts of the OSCE region is loud and clear. Our OSCE commitments are more relevant than ever and we call on all participating States to live up to them and reverse existing violations. We will continue to work on strengthening respect for fundamental freedoms and to advance the implementation of our commitments in this regard. Despite some progress made, we deeply regret that we were not able to adopt any of the eight Decisions tabled in the Third Dimension. We believe that work on priority areas need to continue in the upcoming years.

With the decision on good governance and connectivity we have taken a step forward in our commitment to combatting corruption and promoting transparent and accountable governance and to advancing trade and transport links in our region. We believe this decision provides a solid foundation for our work under the Austrian Chairmanship next year.

The European Union stresses its strong support for the OSCE autonomous institutions, the OSCE field missions and the Secretariat. We reiterate our deep appreciation for the work of ODIHR, the RFoM and the HCNM and our unwavering support for their strong and flexible mandates. Their ability to carry out these mandates must be preserved.

We welcome the planned activities announced by the President of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly and are looking forward to a fruitful cooperation.

The OSCE's southern region – the Mediterranean – should remain a priority in 2017. We appreciate the Austrian Chair's efforts throughout the year on common interests and challenges, including the situation in Libya, which represents a major risk to security in the Mediterranean region and the OSCE area as a whole. We look forward to working with the Italian upcoming chair of the Mediterranean

Contact Group. The OSCE Mediterranean Conference in October this year has confirmed the relevance of youth in the security context. We are convinced that a youth perspective is essential particularly when dealing with issues such as preventing radicalisation, and migration. We cannot waste the great potential of youth in the creation of democratic and inclusive societies.

We greatly appreciate Austria's readiness to assume the Chairmanship of the OSCE at this critical point in time. Minister Kurz, we look forward to working with you and your able team during your Chairmanship and we wish you every success. You can count on our full support.

I request that this statement be attached to the journal of today's meeting.

The Candidate Countries the FORMER YUGOSLAV REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA*, MONTENEGRO* and ALBANIA*, the Country of the Stabilisation and Association Process and Potential Candidate BOSNIA and HERZEGOVINA, and the EFTA country NORWAY, member of the European Economic Area, as well as UKRAINE, the REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA, GEORGIA and SAN MARINO align themselves with this statement.

* The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro and Albania continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.