



EUROPEAN UNION

OSCE Permanent Council No. 1365 Vienna, 31 March 2022

EU statement on the Report by the OSCE Project Co-ordinator in Uzbekistan, Ambassador Pierre von Arx

1. The European Union warmly welcomes Ambassador Pierre von Arx to the Permanent Council and thanks him and his team for their comprehensive report. Your presentation occurs at a grim time for the OSCE and the OSCE region as a whole, with Russia's brutal and unjustified war of aggression raging in Ukraine, which we condemn in the strongest possible terms. We hope our region will soon find a path to stability and security whereby our common OSCE principles and commitments will be fully respected by all participating States.
2. Dear Ambassador, we appreciate the strengthened engagement of Uzbekistan with the OSCE, facilitated by the PCUz. We commend the PCUz for continued efforts in all three dimensions and for supporting the host country in implementing OSCE principles and commitments together with supporting Uzbekistan's reform priorities.
3. Uzbekistan's major reform programme known as the national "2017-2021 Action Strategy for Development" and the recently signed "New Uzbekistan's Development Strategy for 2022-2026" demonstrate Uzbekistan's commitment to reform the country, including through a number of joint projects by the PCUz, governmental authorities and civil society.
4. We recognize the efforts of the PCUz to continue adjusting their working methods and activities to the ongoing and evolving Covid-19 pandemic situation. In addition, we appreciate that, despite the Covid-19 pandemic,

several high-level official visits took place in Uzbekistan, including by the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media and the Director of OSCE/ODIHR.

5. We welcome the good cooperation and the positive results of numerous projects and activities carried out by the PCUZ and support continued activities, in particular in the areas of good governance and transparency, protection of private property rights, combating corruption, money laundering and financing of terrorism. The PCUZ's support to Uzbekistan in promoting green economy policies and environmental security, including the promotion of sustainable agricultural practices, is also appreciated.
6. We value the focus on promoting gender equality and women's empowerment through project activities aimed at strengthening the role of women in socio-economic life and the support to Uzbekistan in implementing the Women, Peace and Security agenda. We value support to promoting women's participation in business, as well as in public and political life and capacity building of female politicians.
7. We regret to hear of the difficulties of the PCUZ in attracting and retaining staff and are concerned that the situation will worsen due to non-adaptation of salary scales to rapidly increasing costs of living and the reduction of the Board and Lodging Allowances rate for Uzbekistan. These issues should be addressed and we appeal to other participating States to keep them in mind when negotiating the budget provisions.
8. The PCUZ's work needs to remain balanced across all three dimensions, in accordance with priorities set by the participating States and to maintain focus on activities where the OSCE can really have impact. We underline the importance of the PCUZ' activities in all of Uzbekistan and encourage your engagement in this respect.
9. The EU continues to support reform efforts in Uzbekistan. We attach great importance to the security, stability and prosperity of Uzbekistan and the whole region. We underline the EU Strategy on Central Asia, which focuses 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 human rights and fundamental freedoms, rule of law, civil society, the rights of women, sustainable development and good governance, among others, remain at the core of our relations, as well as border security and management.

10. In conclusion, the European Union thanks Ambassador Pierre von Arx and his able team for their valuable work. We wish you every success.

The Candidate Countries REPUBLIC of NORTH MACEDONIA*, MONTENEGRO*, SERBIA* and ALBANIA* and the EFTA countries ICELAND, LIECHTENSTEIN, members of the European Economic Area, as well as UKRAINE, the REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA, GEORGIA align themselves with this statement.

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