



## EUROPEAN UNION

### OSCE Permanent Council No.1449 Vienna, 9 November 2023

#### **EU Statement on the Report by the OSCE Special Representative and Co-ordinator for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings, Dr Kari Johnstone**

1. The European Union warmly welcomes the newly appointed OSCE Special Representative and Co-ordinator for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings and congratulates her on her appointment. Dr Johnstone brings with her extensive experience in countering trafficking in human beings. We would also like to express our gratitude to former Special Representative Valiant Richey and, until recently, Acting Co-ordinator Andrea Salvoni for their leadership.
2. This year we are marking the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the OSCE Action Plan to Combat Trafficking in Human Beings - an opportunity to take stock of OSCE commitments and action in the field of combating trafficking in human beings. We appreciate the good discussions during the Joint Committee meeting, that took place this July, which showed that, 20 years after the adoption of the Action Plan, trafficking in human beings remains a complex and global phenomenon. Therefore, it is essential to implement the commitments laid out in the OSCE Action Plan and in several Ministerial Council Decisions,
3. Trafficking in human beings is and remains a grave human rights violation and a terrible reality in the EU, Europe and beyond, making our cooperation in this area even more crucial. We need to continue working together to effectively address common challenges, such as the digital dimension of this crime and the increased risks faced by Ukrainian people fleeing Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine, with the vast majority being women and children. The EU and its Member States have responded swiftly to these challenges with the dedicated EU Common Anti-

Trafficking Plan and the temporary protection provided to approximately 4 million Ukrainians fleeing Russia's war of aggression. However, we must remain vigilant, continue to analyse emerging trends, target the demand that fosters trafficking for all forms of exploitation and strive for a forward-looking approach to combating trafficking in human beings.

4. The OSCE Action Plan to combat trafficking in human beings and its addenda provide participating States with concrete guidelines and best practices for anti-trafficking policies related to the 4 Ps: Prevention, protection of victims at every stage, prosecution and criminal justice responses to end the impunity of traffickers and deliver justice to victims, as well as partnership. The anti-trafficking response to Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine has shown the added value of coordinated action of different regional and international partners, which have promoted effective measures in full respect of the respective mandates.
5. The mid-term implementation of the EU Strategy on Combating Trafficking in Human Beings 2021-2025 was evaluated this week during a meeting of the EU Network of National Rapporteurs and Coordinators, as well as the EU Civil Society Platform.
6. The EU commends the work of the Office of the Special Representative in providing participating States with timely analysis and recommendations to implement OSCE commitments, mitigate the risk of human trafficking offline and online stemming from the flow of refugees coming from Ukraine, and adapt the OSCE response to the evolving challenges of this crime, with a central focus on technology. We also support and recognise the value of simulation-based exercises conducted by the Office, such as the first Central Asia regional simulation-based training completed in June, national trainings in Republic of Moldova, Ukraine, and Georgia, and the ongoing simulation for members of the Council of the Baltic Sea States.
7. We also encourage the Office of the Special Representative to continue cooperating with international partners and coordinating OSCE-wide anti-trafficking efforts, as well as keeping the topic of trafficking in human

beings high on the political agenda. We reiterate the crucial importance of adopting a victim-centred, gender-and child-sensitive approach in the fight against trafficking.

8. In conclusion, there is still much to be done in effectively combatting trafficking in human beings and undoubtedly, there will be further challenges along the way. The European Union, its Member States and the EU Anti-Trafficking Coordinator look forward to continuing cooperation with the OSCE, and the new Special Representative, to eradicate human trafficking.

The Candidate Countries TÜRKIYE, NORTH MACEDONIA\*, MONTENEGRO\*, SERBIA\*, ALBANIA\*, UKRAINE, the REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA\*, and BOSNIA and HERZEGOVINA\*, the Potential Candidate Country GEORGIA, and the EFTA countries ICELAND and LIECHTENSTEIN, members of the European Economic Area, as well as ANDORRA, MONACO, and SAN MARINO.

\* North Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia, Albania, and Bosnia and Herzegovina continue to be part of the Stabilization and Association Process