



EUROPEAN UNION

OSCE Permanent Council No. 1434 Vienna, 20 July 2023

EU Statement in response to the OSCE Secretary General's Report on the OSCE's Response to the Implications of Afghanistan for the OSCE Region

1. The European Union thanks the Secretary General for the thematic report on *the OSCE's Response to the Implications of Afghanistan for the OSCE Region (RIAOR)*, which contains important and timely updates on the relevant work carried out by the Organisation in recent months.
2. The EU is committed to peace and stability in Afghanistan and to supporting the people of Afghanistan. A stable Afghanistan is in the interest of the international community as a whole, to prevent regional instability, terrorism threats, drug trafficking, forced displacement and irregular migration. These important issues of concern are well highlighted in the report.
3. We would like to thank once again Poland for having convened in May a special meeting of the Asian Partners for Cooperation Group on the important topic of the situation of women and girls in Afghanistan. Through the insightful accounts of the Afghan women participants, the meeting highlighted that full respect for the human rights and fundamental freedoms of women and girls and their equal and meaningful participation in society are not only goals in themselves but also prerequisites for sustainable economic and political development, social cohesion, stability, and peace.
4. The EU strongly condemns the decisions of the Taliban to deny women's and girls' access to secondary schools and universities and to ban Afghan women from

working for national and international non-governmental organisations, as well as for the UN and its agencies, funds and programmes. These decisions place women and Afghan society as a whole in an increasingly vulnerable position and have direct and life-threatening repercussions. The EU continues its call on the Taliban to lift immediately their decisions and to ensure women's and girls' equal access to education and all social, economic, and public spheres of life.

5. Despite mounting and systematic restrictions and intimidation, women and girls continue to stand up for their rights and to support and contribute to their families and communities. We acknowledge their extraordinary courage and applaud the many Afghan communities and individuals who have bravely stood up in support.
6. The OSCE – with its comprehensive concept of security and long-standing experience in the Central Asian region – is playing a crucial role in mitigating risks, addressing vulnerabilities and pursuing opportunities related to the situation in Afghanistan. This is for the benefit of the people of Afghanistan and with the overall aim to enhance support to the Central Asian participating States.
7. We reiterate our support to the OSCE RIAOR Repository Programme, launched following the Stockholm Ministerial Council in December 2021, upon the initiative of the Swedish OSCE Chairpersonship, to catalyse funding and ensure further coordination of existing and new extra-budgetary projects. The European Union and its Member States support many of the 27 extra-budgetary projects included in the Repository Programme.
8. The EU takes positive note of the results achieved and activities planned through such extra-budgetary activities of the Secretariat and the field missions, as well as the targeted allocation of UB resources. Among the many initiatives, we particularly commend the ongoing excellent cooperation between the EU and the OSCE on phase II of the EU-funded project for the Stabilisation of Tajikistan's Southern Border region with Afghanistan. We also welcome the active participation of women from both Afghanistan and Central Asian participating States in the OSCE Women's Peace Leadership Programme and in the Young Women for Peace Initiative, within the WIN project, which aims to ensure that the voice of Afghan

women and girls is heard at the international level. The OSCE greatly contributes to women's empowerment in the region, also thanks to OCEEA's ground-breaking project on women's participation in the energy sector, as well as the safety of women, for example, by supporting the Women's Resource Centres in Tajikistan. Finally, we would also like to commend the work of the Office of the Coordinator for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings and the organisation of the first ever Central Asia regional simulation-based training for anti-trafficking practitioners, which took place in Astana at the end of June.

9. Madam Secretary General, in conclusion, the European Union highly values the work of the OSCE in mitigating risks and addressing challenges related to the crisis in Afghanistan, particularly in neighbouring participating States. We look forward to continuing and further strengthening our cooperation for the benefit of the people of Afghanistan and of the Central Asian participating States.

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

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