



EUROPEAN UNION

OSCE CiO Warsaw Human Dimension Conference 2-13 October 2023

EU statement - Opening Session

1. The European Union thanks the CiO of North Macedonia and ODIHR for the excellent organisation of the **Warsaw Human Dimension Conference**. While the consensus on the annual mandated HDIM was once again hindered by Russia, we deeply appreciate this opportunity to engage with civil society representatives, many of whom took great risks to speak to us, including those who travelled through war-torn Ukraine. We highly value OSCE autonomous institutions' assistance to participating States in upholding human rights and democracy and we thank ODIHR, in particular, for offering us a platform for dialogue.
2. Regrettably, for the second year in a row, the conference is overshadowed by **Russia's continued unprovoked, unjustified and illegal war of aggression against Ukraine**. Russia must fully respect the independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine within its internationally recognised borders, immediately and unconditionally cease its illegal war of aggression against Ukraine and withdraw all its forces and equipment from the entire territory of Ukraine. The Belarusian authorities must stop enabling Russia's war of aggression and abide by their international obligations.
3. The EU strongly condemns Russia's attempt to legitimise its illegal military control and attempted annexation of parts of Ukrainian territories through illegitimate so-called "elections". Such attempts were also condemned in the UNGA Resolution of October 2022. We echo the OSCE leadership that any such "elections" organised by the Russian Federation in Ukraine's temporarily and illegally occupied territories have no validity under international law.

4. Regrettably, unresolved conflicts persist in the OSCE region. The EU reiterates its unwavering support and commitment to the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Republic of Moldova and Georgia within their internationally recognised borders, and remains fully committed to facilitate efforts to secure sustainable peace and stability in the whole South Caucasus.
5. The EU is deeply concerned by the deteriorating situation in Nagorno-Karabakh in light of the ongoing exodus of its local population. We reiterate our call on Azerbaijan to ensure the rights and security of the Karabakh Armenians and to provide tangible, action-based guarantees. The EU reiterates its support to the sovereignty and territorial integrity of both Azerbaijan and Armenia.
6. As our fundamental principles and OSCE commitments continue to be violated on a daily basis, the human dimension of the comprehensive security concept proves to be more important than ever. Russia's external aggression is accompanied by harrowing internal repression, as documented, *inter alia*, in the OSCE Moscow Mechanism report and by the UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Russian Federation.
7. Perpetrators of war crimes, crimes against humanity and other atrocity crimes must be and will be held accountable according to international law. The Moscow Mechanism reports are an essential contribution to a first analysis of facts with a view to presenting it to accountability mechanisms that have jurisdiction, or may have in the future. It rests upon OSCE participating States and the wider international community to ensure that necessary follow-up actions are undertaken, including through the further use of OSCE tools and mechanisms.
8. Civil society organisations and human rights defenders are an indispensable element in the system of checks and balances in a healthy democracy and in holding participating States accountable to the commitments we have made in the OSCE. The fight for human rights and fundamental freedoms remains a high-risk activity in many parts of the OSCE region, as members of civil society, human rights defenders, lawyers, journalists and media actors become targets of arbitrary detention, enforced disappearances or torture because of their work. These risks increase in situations of conflict or in countries where the judicial power does not enjoy independence, as we witness in Russia and in Belarus.

9. As we look forward to constructively engaging in the discussions, we reaffirm that the EU will continue to call on all participating States, including within the EU, to live up to their international human rights obligations and OSCE commitments, as well as to speak up against the shrinking space and reprisals against civil society.

The Candidate Countries NORTH MACEDONIA*, MONTENEGRO*, ALBANIA*, and BOSNIA and HERZEGOVINA*, and the EFTA countries ICELAND and LIECHTENSTEIN, members of the European Economic Area, as well as ANDORRA and SAN MARINO align themselves with this statement.

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