



EUROPEAN UNION

OSCE Permanent Council No. 1429 Vienna, 22 June 2023

EU Statement on the Report by the Head of the OSCE Programme Office in Astana, Dr. Volker Frobarth

1. The European Union warmly welcomes Dr. Frobarth to the Permanent Council and thanks him for his comprehensive report.
2. We appreciate the Programme Office's achievements, especially against the backdrop of Russia's unprovoked, unjustified and illegal war of aggression against Ukraine, which has significant negative consequences also for the societies and economies of Central Asian countries.
3. We take positive note of the good cooperation between the Programme Office and the host authorities and civil society, including the high-level meetings. In this regard, we welcome the visit of OSCE Secretary General Schmid to Kazakhstan from 7 to 9 June and the organisation of an OSCE Regional Meeting of Heads of Field Operations in Central Asia during the visit.
4. The efficient preparation of the presidential and parliamentary elections that took place amidst political and socio-economic reforms initiated by President Tokayev in recent years and in the aftermath of the tragic events of January 2022, including substantial amendments to the Constitution adopted by referendum in June 2022, is commendable. The EU also welcomes the legal amendments that address some previous recommendations by ODIHR, introducing more competitiveness and providing wider choice for voters, as a positive development.

5. The EU encourages Kazakhstan to fully implement the OSCE/ODIHR recommendations. The development of resilient democratic institutions and a strong civil society are crucial steps toward a just and fair Kazakhstan that is more inclusive and democratic. The EU fully supports Kazakhstan in the implementation of ongoing changes and emphasises the importance of further political and socio-economic reforms. We will continue to support Kazakhstan's reform and modernisation processes, as well as democracy, rule of law, human rights, stability and inclusivity in the country, for the benefit of all its people.
6. We value the Office's contribution to the advancement of the host country's development plans and the implementation of the OSCE commitments, as well as the regional engagement and longstanding cooperation with local partners, including with civil society, media, academia, and the private sector, despite the absence of an approved Unified Budget. We equally appreciate that programmatic activities often incorporate a gender perspective and prioritise engaging youth.
7. In the Politico-Military Dimension, we welcome the support to the police reform and the enhancement of border security through capacity building and training courses. We also appreciate activities on addressing transnational threats, including countering cybercrimes aimed against companies and citizens, as well as engagement with law enforcement, strengthening open parliament practices, including activities involving youth representatives. In this context, we welcome the importance placed on engaging various stakeholders in this process.
8. In the Economic and Environmental Dimension, we welcome the continued work on combating corruption, money laundering, terrorism-financing, and strengthening Kazakhstan's connectivity capabilities with targeted seminars for custom officers. The EU also supports raising the OSCE's profile in promoting environmental and climate issues, particularly in Central Asia. In this regard, we welcome the efforts by the Office to assist the Government's efforts on regional water management, and promote the Aarhus Convention through roundtable discussions. We also appreciate your work on women's economic empowerment, including the 5th Rural Women's Forum in November 2022.
9. In the Human Dimension, we express support for the Office's technical assistance

in developing national legislation to combat human trafficking and strengthening law enforcement capacities to address cyber-enabled trafficking. The EU also commends the Office for its ongoing promotion of human rights and fundamental freedoms, the rule of law, support for media and internet freedom, addressing sexual and gender-based violence, as well as the strengthening of democratic institutions, as core elements of a comprehensive security approach. Effective cooperation with civil society is of great importance. In this regard, we express our support to the Office for its assistance to the Ombudsperson's office in its mandate, especially in light of Kazakhstan's reform agenda, to provide expert support for institutional building, the promotion of human rights, and the inclusion of youth.

10. Kazakhstan is an important and valuable partner for the EU. The EU Strategy on Central Asia is a valuable roadmap for the EU and Central Asia to forge a strong and durable partnership. Marking the 30th anniversary of diplomatic relations, Kazakhstan and the European Union have reaffirmed a strong commitment to further developing cooperation in line with the Enhanced Partnership and Cooperation Agreement. We remain committed to the universal principles of sovereignty and territorial integrity in line with the UN principles, as well as international security, fundamental freedoms and human rights.

11. In conclusion, we thank Dr. Frobarth and his staff for their work and wish them every success in the fulfilment of their mandate.

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

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