



EUROPEAN UNION

OSCE Permanent Council No. 1421 Vienna, 4 May 2023

EU Statement in Response to the Head by the OSCE Mission in Kosovo, Ambassador Michael Davenport

1. The European Union warmly welcomes the Head of the OSCE Mission in Kosovo^{*1}, Ambassador Michael Davenport and thanks him for presenting his biannual report to the Permanent Council.
2. We reiterate our strong support for the valuable work carried out by the OSCE Mission in Kosovo, which has proven itself as a trusted partner of all communities and contributes to a safe and secure, as well as a democratic, prosperous and multi-ethnic Kosovo, based on respect for human rights, fundamental freedoms and the rule of law, including the rights of persons belonging to minorities.
3. The EU welcomes the Mission's balanced approach based on three programmatic pillars: human rights and communities, democratisation, and security and public safety. We value the Mission's continued involvement in targeted projects and activities dedicated to priority issues such as freedom of expression and media freedom, gender equality and women's empowerment, as well as active youth and civil society, to name just a few.

¹ * This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSCR 1244/1999 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence.

4. The EU welcomes the Mission's activities on promoting inter-community relations. Strengthening coordination with relevant stakeholders for the protection of the rights of persons belonging to minorities and vulnerable groups, including their safety and the protection of their property rights, along with the protection of their cultural and religious heritage, including the Special Protective Zones, should remain high on the Mission's agenda. In this context, the 2016 Constitutional court ruling on the land dispute case in Decani must be implemented. We also welcome the Mission's support for the development and adoption of cultural heritage management plans in Kosovo.

5. Improving the accountability and transparency of institutions remains equally important. We commend the Mission's continued assistance to strengthening the capacities of Kosovo's law enforcement institutions and emphasis on important areas, including fighting organised crime and corruption, combatting trafficking in human beings, as well as preventing and countering violent extremism and radicalisation leading to terrorism. A recent example in that field is the Mission's contribution to the adoption of the Kosovo Action Plan for implementing the 2023-2028 Strategy for preventing and countering Terrorism. We also value the contribution of the Mission to the implementation of the EU-funded OSCE Regional Trial Monitoring Project in the Western Balkans (2021-2023), which contributes to strengthening the rule of law in Kosovo, by supporting a more effective administration of justice in corruption and organised crime cases.

6. We praise the Mission's efforts to improve Kosovo's media environment and the continued focus on freedom of expression, increasing media literacy and safety of journalists. In addition, we highlight the importance of engagement with civil society, including through youth-oriented activities, aimed at enhancing inter-ethnic relations and promoting dialogue.

7. With regard to the recent four mayoral by-elections and two municipal assembly by-elections in the municipalities of Leposavić/q, North Mitrovica/e, Zvečan/Zveçan, and Zubin Potok, the EU recognises that the elections in Kosovo were held in accordance with its legal framework and that efforts were made to ensure their smooth and orderly conduct. At the same time, the EU regrets that not all parties and communities made

use of their democratic right to participate and vote in the elections. A sustainable political solution for these municipalities can only be achieved through the permanent return of Kosovo Serbs to the institutions. Meanwhile, it is crucial that newly formed municipal institutions avoid acts and decisions that could spark tensions. Moreover, the work on the establishment of the Association/Community of Serb majority Municipalities needs to be finalised as soon as possible, in line with Pristina's commitments.

8. The EU welcomes the progress made under the EU-facilitated Dialogue with “the Agreement on the Path to Normalisation between Kosovo and Serbia” reached and its Implementation Annex. Together, the Agreement and its Annex represent an important milestone in the process of normalisation, elevate the Dialogue to a higher level and pave the way towards a comprehensive normalisation of relations. We expect both sides to show political will, pragmatism and constructiveness in order to resolve in a timely manner all outstanding issues. The EU welcomes the continued good cooperation and coordination between the EU and the Mission on issues related to the EU-facilitated Dialogue.
9. The EU underlines that progress in the EU-facilitated Dialogue between Belgrade and Pristina remains essential for both in order to advance on their respective European paths, in line with the European perspective of the region. The EU calls on both sides to fully implement all new obligations and past commitments, constructively engage in the negotiations and make additional substantial efforts, with the aim of reaching a comprehensive legally-binding normalisation agreement. Such an agreement is urgent and crucial for the stability of the entire region. Both sides should also avoid actions that undermine stability and rhetoric that is not conducive to dialogue.
10. Finally, with a strong interest in political and security consolidation in the region, the EU remains determined to continue to assist Kosovo towards lasting stability and prosperity. We wish you Ambassador Davenport and your dedicated team every success and assure you of the EU's resolute support in your important work.

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

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