



EUROPEAN UNION

OSCE Permanent Council No. 1335 Vienna, 16 September 2021

EU Statement in response to the Report by the Head of the OSCE Mission in Kosovo, Ambassador Michael Davenport

FINAL (751 words)

1. The European Union warmly welcomes the new Head of the OSCE Mission in Kosovo, Ambassador Michael Davenport, and thanks him for presenting his first report to the Permanent Council.
2. We reiterate our support for the valuable work carried out by the OSCE Mission in Kosovo, despite the serious challenges linked to the COVID-19 pandemic. The Mission has proven itself as a trusted partner of all communities and contributes to a safe and secure, as well as democratic, prosperous and multi-ethnic Kosovo^{*1}, based on respect for human rights, fundamental freedoms and the rule of law, including the rights of persons belonging to minorities.
3. The European Union welcomes the Mission's balanced approach based on three programmatic pillars: human rights and communities, democratization, and security and public safety. We welcome the Mission's continued involvement in targeted projects and tailored-made activities dedicated to priority issues such as freedom of expression and media freedom, gender equality and women's empowerment, as well as active engagement with youth and civil society in Kosovo.

* 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 follows closely the Mission's efforts to promote inter-community relations. In this regard, we welcome the support for Kosovo institutions in responding to and addressing security incidents and concrete concerns affecting persons belonging to minorities and vulnerable groups. We welcome the Mission's fifth comprehensive assessment of community rights protection in Kosovo, paving the way for further progress in this area. Strengthening the 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. We also welcome the Mission's support for the development and adoption of cultural heritage management plans in Kosovo.
5. We welcome the Mission's continued assistance to strengthening the inclusiveness and efficiency of the decision-making process, as well as placing emphasis on important areas such as fighting organised crime and corruption, combatting trafficking in human beings and preventing and countering violent extremism and radicalization leading to terrorism. Improving the accountability and transparency of institutions remains equally important. We welcome the launch of the EU-funded OSCE Regional Trial Monitoring Project in the Western Balkans (2021-2023), which will contribute to strengthening the rule of law in Kosovo by supporting a more effective administration of justice in corruption and organized crime cases.
6. We praise the Mission's priority 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. In this context, we encourage increased cooperation with the Regional Youth Cooperation Office (RYCO).
7. We highly value the close cooperation between the EU and the Mission on strengthening the electoral process in Kosovo, as manifested by the renewed regional EU-funded project on electoral reform with ODIHR. We welcome the formation of the new Assembly and government in March 2021, as well as the

election of a new president in early April 2021. We encourage all stakeholders to further advance on reforms, guided by the Stabilization and Association Agreement and the European Reform Agenda, as well as on regional cooperation. The recommendations of the successive EU Election Observation Missions should be followed up with determination. The EU will be deploying a new observation mission for the upcoming local elections in Kosovo scheduled on 17 October.

8. The European Union 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. Both sides must fully implement all past commitments, constructively engage in the negotiations and make additional substantial efforts, with the aim of reaching a comprehensive legally-binding agreement. Such an agreement is urgent and crucial for the stability of the entire region.
9. In conclusion, with a strong interest in the political and security consolidation in the region, the European Union remains determined to continue to assist Kosovo towards lasting stability. We thank once again Ambassador Michael Davenport and his dedicated team for the valuable work carried out by the OSCE Mission in Kosovo and assure them of the EU's resolute support.

The Candidate Countries REPUBLIC of NORTH MACEDONIA*, MONTENEGRO* and ALBANIA*, the Country of the Stabilisation and Association Process and Potential Candidate BOSNIA and HERZEGOVINA, and the EFTA countries ICELAND and LIECHTENSTEIN, members of the European Economic Area, as well as GEORGIA align themselves with this statement.

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