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**STATEMENT BY
THE EUROPEAN UNION AT THE 1390th MEETING OF THE
OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

22 September 2022

**In response to the three Personal Representatives of the
Chairperson-in-Office on tolerance and non-discrimination**

The European Union thanks the Personal Representatives of the Chairperson-in-Office for their participation in this Permanent Council meeting.

Combating discrimination and all forms of intolerance are among the European Union's priorities, in terms of both its internal policy and its external action, also at the OSCE. This strong commitment has been demonstrated through the European Commission's adoption in 2020 of the first EU Anti-Racism Action Plan and then, in 2021, of the first EU Strategy on Combating Antisemitism and Fostering Jewish Life. The European Commission has also recently adopted the Gender Action Plan III (2021–2025), the LGBTIQ Equality Strategy (2020–2025), the Strategy for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2021–2030) and the new EU Roma strategic framework.

Public authorities have a leading role to play in systematically and explicitly condemning hate speech. Combating all forms and manifestations of racism and xenophobia requires adequate legal responses but also preventive and educational measures promoting the values of tolerance, social inclusion and the equality of all before the law. The tools developed by the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR), in particular for training security forces and magistrates and for collecting data on hate crimes, are valuable levers to help us.

In that regard, we emphasize once again that, to be effective, the work of the Personal Representatives must be closely co-ordinated with that of the ODIHR under the aegis of the Chairmanship. We support the closest possible co-ordination among the three Personal Representatives so as to facilitate a universal approach to human rights. In this regard, we welcome the joint visits of the three Personal Representatives to the Council of Europe in Strasbourg in April of this year, together with Sabrina Saoudi, ODIHR Adviser on Intolerance against Muslims, and to Georgia on 13 September, together with a representative of the United Nations Human Rights Council and the High Commissioner on National Minorities. Their common efforts are crucial to maintain effectiveness in our comprehensive approach to the fight against all forms of discrimination, while promoting intercultural and interreligious dialogue in a spirit of openness and mutual understanding.

We note very positively that, on 13 April, the Special Representatives denounced Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine and the damage inflicted by the former on places of worship in Ukraine. We particularly appreciate that the Special Representatives again denounced Russia's aggression against

Ukraine and the destruction of civilian property, including places of worship, on 22 August – the International Day Commemorating the Victims of Acts of Violence Based on Religion or Belief. They also deplored the fact that, and I quote: “The religious leaders in Russia willingly or under coercion provide a rationale for this unprovoked war. Those who would speak out or even remain silent do so at their own peril.”

We remain in favour of gender-mainstreaming the activities of the three Personal Representatives, especially in relation to the OSCE Action Plan for the Promotion of Gender Equality adopted in 2004. We underscore the relevance of an intersectional approach in the fight against intolerance and discrimination.

At the OSCE level, the Copenhagen (1990) and Madrid (2007) commitments clearly set out our collective duty to combat all forms of discrimination, whatever the basis. They recall the urgent need to ensure that human rights and fundamental freedoms apply universally to all human beings in law and in practice. In that regard, we express our concern about the danger of compartmentalization in the fight against religious intolerance at the OSCE, which risks undermining the coherence of our commitments.

We are deeply concerned about the rise in manifestations of intolerance and discrimination, both online and offline. These are contrary to all human rights values. Measures taken in response to the COVID-19 pandemic must take into account the needs of those most at risk of all forms of discrimination.

As tensions mount, the recollection of our common values and of the common basis for combating all forms of intolerance – the affirmation of the equal dignity of human beings and opposition to intolerance of others because they are different – are the best bulwark against the spiral of hatred. These values are at the heart of the OSCE’s commitments and should guide us more than ever in our work.

The candidate countries the Republic of North Macedonia¹, Montenegro¹, Albania¹, Ukraine and the Republic of Moldova, the potential candidate countries Bosnia and Herzegovina¹ and Georgia, the European Free Trade Association countries and members of the European Economic Area Iceland and Liechtenstein, as well as Andorra and San Marino, align themselves with this statement.

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