



EUROPEAN UNION

OSCE Forum for Security Co-operation N°1066 Vienna, 17 January 2024

EU Opening Statement

1. The European Union and its Member States warmly welcome H.E Dr. Constantinos Kombos to the Forum for Security Co-operation. Thank you for providing us with the overview of your planned programme for the next months.
2. Excellency, your Chairpersonship follows our winter recess which, for a second consecutive year, has been tragically overshadowed by mounting losses of lives, both civilians and military, and senseless destruction caused by Russia's illegal, unprovoked and unjustified war of aggression against Ukraine. On 29 December, Russia carried out one of its largest aerial attacks since the beginning of its full-scale invasion of Ukraine. This began, when in less than one week, Russia launched hundreds of missiles and drones on densely-populated areas in many cities and towns across the entire territory of Ukraine. Hardly a day passes without massive airstrikes, followed by mourning for the senseless loss of life. We express our deep sympathy and strong solidarity with the families and loved ones of those killed and wounded.
3. The EU and its Member States reiterate their strongest condemnation of these attacks by Russia as futile attempts to undermine and break the resilience of the Ukrainian people in this second winter of an unacceptable and abominable war of aggression. This strategy of terror will fail, as it did last year.
4. Russia's illegal, brutal and unjustified war of aggression against Ukraine will remain at the centre of our discussions here in the FSC. We will steadfastly continue to address Russia's shameful and catastrophic full-scale invasion for as long as necessary. The Russian Federation must and will be held accountable for all its dreadful actions. Russia alone bears responsibility for all destruction and the loss of innocent lives. It is so plainly obvious that Russia itself is the one that can end this war now. We also condemn the support provided by Belarus to Russia's war of aggression. Until Russia and Belarus stop what they are doing, we cannot conduct business as usual at the OSCE, including at the FSC.

5. Excellency, your presented programme with security dialogues' topics include major issues which we continue to face today and where the FSC can play an important role in contributing to increasing security in the entire OSCE area and beyond. Whether it is environment and security, humanitarian mine action, international humanitarian law and human security in armed conflicts, or the women, peace and security agenda, these topics amongst others should be discussed with our full attention and commitment within the politico-military dimension of the OSCE. We should make a genuine effort to address them in this Forum.
6. We welcome that you are focussing especially on the gender aspects of these issues. They will continue to require our attention as we still have much more to do, despite all the progress we have made. Unfortunately, Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine, as evidenced by reports of widespread conflict-related sexual and gender-based violence conducted by Russian forces, unambiguously demonstrated their continuous relevance.
7. The planned joint FSC-PC on Security and Environment is very timely and exactly the type of topic where multilateral efforts are needed as no country would be able to handle and overcome these issues on its own. Recent natural and human-made tragedies, for example the destruction of the Kakhovka Dam by the Russian forces, remain a stark reminder of the impact that our environment has on our security.
8. Excellency, the Cypriot FSC Chairpersonship can count on our full support. We look forward to working with Ambassador Ignatiou and his capable team in the upcoming trimester. We wish you every success in this challenging task.

Thank you.

The Candidate Countries NORTH MACEDONIA*, MONTENEGRO*, ALBANIA*, UKRAINE, the REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA, BOSNIA and HERZEGOVINA*, and GEORGIA, 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.