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EUROPEAN UNION

OSCE Permanent Council No. 1585
Vienna, 12 November 2026

EU Statement in response to the address of Special Representative of the Chairperson-in-Office on Civil Society, Anu Juvonen

1. The European Union welcomes Anu Juvonen, Special Representative of the Chairperson-in-Office on Civil Society, to the Permanent Council and thanks her for her address and dedicated engagement throughout the year. We also express our appreciation to the Swiss Chairpersonship for ensuring that civil society remains an integral part of the OSCE's work.
2. While States bear the primary responsibility for safeguarding human rights, civil society is indispensable to democratic societies and to our comprehensive concept of security. Civil society organisations, human rights defenders, journalists and other independent voices play a vital role in promoting accountability, defending fundamental freedoms and ensuring that governments uphold their commitments. A strong civil society engagement in Ukraine plays an essential role in strengthening Ukraine’s democratic resilience, supporting humanitarian efforts, documenting human rights violations and ensuring accountability, as well as countering Russian disinformation amid Russia’s war of aggression.
3. Across the OSCE region, the space for civil society continues to shrink. The European Union deplores the increasing use of restrictive legislation, administrative obstacles and other measures that obstruct the legitimate work of civil society organisations and human rights defenders. We are deeply concerned by the growing risks faced by those who speak out, including harassment, intimidation, arbitrary detention and other forms of repression.
4. These threats increasingly extend beyond national borders. Human rights defenders, journalists and other critical voices living in exile continue to face intimidation and harassment, while family members at home may be subjected to pressure and reprisals. Such practices seek not only to silence individuals, but also

to undermine the broader networks of solidarity and civic engagement that democratic societies depend upon.

5. New technologies add another dimension to these challenges. Digital surveillance, online harassment and the misuse of artificial intelligence can provide new means of monitoring, targeting and silencing critical voices. At the same time, these technologies offer important opportunities for civil society to organise, document human rights violations and amplify independent voices. We must ensure that technological developments strengthen, rather than undermine, the exercise of human rights and fundamental freedoms.
6. The adoption of the EU Civil Society Strategy in November 2025 reaffirms our commitment to protecting and strengthening civic space and supporting meaningful civil society participation. The EU also continues to provide concrete support to human rights defenders at risk, including through its dedicated protection mechanisms.

   Mr Chair,

7. The OSCE has a particular responsibility to safeguard civil society participation in its work. To this end, we deeply regret the continued obstruction of the mandated Human Dimension Implementation Meeting, which remains an important forum for reviewing the implementation of our shared commitments. Against this background, we reiterate our strong support for the Warsaw Human Dimension Conference as a unique and credible platform for direct and meaningful engagement between participating States and civil society.
8. However, ensuring safeguards goes beyond providing a platform, we must also ensure a safe environment for those who engage. Civil society representatives must be able to participate freely and safely in OSCE meetings without fear of intimidation or reprisals. Any attempt to silence or punish individuals for engaging with the OSCE is unacceptable.
9. In closing, we reaffirm the European Union's unwavering support for a strong, independent and vibrant civil society. Protecting civic space and ensuring meaningful civil society participation are fundamental to fulfilling our shared OSCE commitments and strengthening security across our region.

Albania, Andorra, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Iceland, Liechtenstein, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Norway, Republic of Moldova, San Marino, and Ukraine align themselves with this statement.