



EUROPEAN UNION

**OSCE Permanent Council No 1145
Vienna, 11 May 2017**

EU statement on the occasion of Europe Day

Mr. Chairman, on the 9th May, we celebrate Europe Day. This is a symbolic day, marking the beginning of an important project – a unity of European nations living side by side in peace and prosperity. It is the day Robert Schuman, in his famous speech, launched an unprecedented effort, through unprecedented means, to make old enemies live together, not just side by side, but in need of each other.

We should not forget why the European Union was created, and why the drive to put the past behind us was so strong. World War II was one of the greatest tragedies ever to have afflicted the peoples of Europe and the world and took tens of millions of lives. The war brought about violations of human rights and freedoms, as well as crimes against peace, war crimes, and crimes against humanity. We mourn all those who lost their lives as victims of the war, the Holocaust, occupations, or acts of repression.

We pay our earnest tribute to the historic role of the allied forces and their sacrifices in the defeat of Nazism during the World War II, which, we should remember, began with the invasion of Poland in September 1939. We should also remember that the World War II brought about painful divisions in Europe. For many European countries, the end of the World War II did not bring freedom, but more crimes against humanity committed against their people.

An honest and thorough research on the history of the Second World War contributes to reconciliation. Given our responsibility, towards all victims, past and present, we should avoid using, for extraneous purposes, divisive and selected approaches. In this regard, we condemn one-sided interpretations of history and attempts to justify the Ribbentrop-Molotov pact.

As we commemorate the victims of World War II, we also cannot forget that peace is still not a reality on the whole of the European continent. Russia's violations of international law and the fundamental principles of the UN and the OSCE in the context of the crisis in and around Ukraine, including the illegal annexation of Crimea and Sevastopol and its destabilising actions in eastern Ukraine, have seriously harmed the vision of peace in Europe.

Peace, to be sustainable, is more than the absence of war. The Union of today has evolved and adapted to contemporary circumstances, as a rule-based community of States united in their reliance on each other's solidarity and constitutes a strong community of values and of purpose.

The European Union will continue to work tirelessly, also in the OSCE, to share and deepen the benefits of peace and security on this continent and beyond. Europe Day is about more than simply commemorating. It must also be the opportunity to take a step back and remember and remind why what we do is important, and that is important that we succeed together, for the benefit of all our citizens.

The Candidate Countries the FORMER YUGOSLAV REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA*, MONTENEGRO* and ALBANIA*, the Country of the Stabilisation and Association Process and Potential Candidate BOSNIA and HERZEGOVINA, and the EFTA country ICELAND, member of the European Economic Area, as well as UKRAINE, the REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA, GEORGIA and SAN MARINO align themselves with this statement.

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