

UK statement in response to OSCE Head of Mission visit to Kosovo

Thank you Mr Chair

The UK welcomes Ambassador Braathu to the Permanent Council. We thank you for the comprehensive Report on the Mission's activities during the reporting period. And we echo the views expressed in the EU statement.

I would first of all like – on a personal level – to thank you and your team for your hospitality during my recent visit to Kosovo. And for the excellent programme you put together. The meetings with your team and your interlocutors was an immensely valuable experience. This included learning about the Mission's role in monitoring developments, its work on the ground with bringing communities and different ethnicities together – often in challenging circumstances – and in supporting interfaith dialogue and support for the Roma community. I visited Mitrovica, Prizren and Pristina. I was struck by the on the ground efforts to foster dialogue, discussion and reconciliation. As well as the high reputation of the OSCE Mission in Kosovo. And I applaud you and your team's efforts.

As your Report notes, the key development of the last six months was the extraordinary Assembly of Kosovo elections on 6 October. We echo the comments in your Report, commending Kosovo for conducting elections in a well-administered and transparent manner. The UK is grateful to the Mission for the technical advice and assistance provided in this process in four northern Kosovo municipalities. On 18 October, the Head of Kosovo's Central Electoral Commission also briefed us in Vienna on the electoral process and her work with the Mission. This was an excellent opportunity for delegations to hear first-hand from one of your interlocutors. And we look forward to a further briefing from a Kosovo interlocutor later in the year.

With early warning and prevention being a key part of the OSCE's work, your spot reports are highly valuable. In your report of 14 October you highlighted an issue with certain postal votes and the actions that were being taken. We appreciate such timely information on key developments.

On the range of activities detailed in your report, I would like to highlight your work with local communities. In particular, the engagement of youth can be a force for good in bridging ethnic divides. We appreciate that you worked to bring different ethnic and religious communities together through, for example, youth camps, volunteer work and engaging students in inter-ethnic dialogue to promote mutual understanding. We welcome these positive efforts.

We also welcome the support of the Mission in enhancing the capacities of local law enforcement institutions to identify and tackle hate crimes and bias-motivated incidents.

Your Report details other areas in which you have been active in this

reporting period, including on displaced persons, where you have increased your thematic reporting. And used these documents as an advocacy tool to support change.

On gender, we welcome the initiatives you have taken to raise awareness on mainstreaming and the importance of gender equality, including through the production of eight televised programmes, and your work with journalists. Without gender equality, and the meaningful participation of women in the processes that affect their lives, progress will always be limited.

In addition – during the 16 days of Activism you launched the Report on the 'OSCE-led Survey on the Well-being and Safety of Women in Kosovo'. This Report highlighted the prevalence of violence against women, and it included 37 recommendations on how to address it. We would be grateful to hear more on the feedback you received from your roundtable meetings.

Your support for democratic institutions and oversight arrangements is critical. The areas of media literacy and safety of journalists have rightly received your attention. However, challenges remain in the justice system. We welcome further engagement of the mission in this important area.

On the current political situation, I refer to previous published statements made by my Government together with other countries. We encourage a return to Dialogue between Pristina and Belgrade as soon as possible with the goal of a comprehensive agreement that has the support of elected representatives in both countries. We hope that a constructive way forward will soon be found.

Thank you.