

## UK statement in response to the Head of the OSCE Programme Office in Nur-Sultan

Thank you Mr Chair. I would like to join other speakers in welcoming back Ambassador Szabo to the Permanent Council and I thank him for his thoughtful and thorough report.

I would like to highlight that Kazakhstan is an important partner country for the UK, with which we look forward to continuing and expanding our bilateral cooperation.

The OSCE Programme Office in Nur-Sultan plays a vital role supporting the government of Kazakhstan in its implementation of OSCE commitments, including in crucially important areas such as domestic violence, gender equality, human rights and fundamental freedoms, transnational threats and environmental issues. My colleagues in the British Embassy in Nur-Sultan are eager to continue collaborating and partnering with the Office, including in delivering common objectives in the third dimension.

The report speaks for itself in terms of the range of activity undertaken by the Programme Office – with around 100 events in all three dimensions reaching out to over 10,000 participants throughout the country.

There are two project examples in the report which I think well-illustrate the significant – and unique – convening power and reach of the Office bringing together the government, other international organisations, and civil society for the benefit of the people of Kazakhstan. The first is the co-operation with universities, as well as independent platforms for dialogue, co-organising an annual camp for young people to promote youth-oriented policies and reducing the risks of social exclusion among youth. The second is the Office's partnership with the government, the UN agencies and civil society organisations, to bring 'The 16 days of activism against Gender-Based Violence' into the spotlight through an awareness-raising campaign.

Going forward, the work of Office will require – like all field missions – navigation through the new global threat of COVID-19. In this regard I would like to send my best wishes for the health and safety of all staff in the Office and their families.

Mr Chair – I noted that the Office has developed the second edition of its Gender Action Plan (from 2020 to 2022), which envisions wider involvement of the Office's contribution to gender mainstreaming. I would take this opportunity to ask the Ambassador to expand on this Plan and outline what amendments were made, and what the lessons learned were, from the first edition that will be implemented going forward.

In conclusion, Mr Chair, I would like to thank Ambassador Szabo again and

wish him and his able team all the best.