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EUROPEAN UNION

**OSCE Permanent Council Nr 935
Vienna, 13 December 2012**

**EU statement on the treatment of the opposition and civil
society in Tajikistan and Kazakhstan**

The European Union reiterates that a vibrant and independent civil society is essential for ensuring respect for fundamental freedoms and human rights. In this regard, we wish to express concern about recent developments in Tajikistan and Kazakhstan, hampering the functioning of opposition and civil society groups.

In Tajikistan, we are concerned by moves against a number of non-governmental organisations by Tajik authorities. The Association of Young Lawyers “Amparo” is threatened with closure, pending a final appeal. Other NGOs are also facing investigation in respect of similarly alleged irregularities with regard to their registration. We are concerned that these recent restrictions will negatively affect the further development of civil society in Tajikistan. We call on the Tajik authorities to reverse these restrictions in line with international obligations to promote freedom of association.

In Kazakhstan, the EU shares the concern expressed by the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media with regard to the petition filed by the Office of the Prosecutor General on 20 November 2012. The petition demands the closure of a number of opposition media outlets as well as of the opposition party “Alga!” and another public organisation on charges of extremism. Reportedly, several media outlets have already been banned or suspended as a result, and court hearings are underway. The EU

underlines that it would be counterproductive for the fight against violent extremism to jeopardize freedom of expression and association. We call on Kazakhstan to fully uphold its international obligations, including its OSCE commitments, and its pledges as a recently elected member of the United Nations Human Rights Council, and to foster a pluralistic and democratic society. Safeguarding fundamental freedoms can only be achieved through ensuring conditions for a thriving civil society.

The Acceding Country Croatia*, the Candidate Countries the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia*, Montenegro*, Iceland+ and Serbia*, the Countries of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidates Albania and Bosnia and Herzegovina, and the EFTA country Norway, member of the European Economic Area, align themselves with this statement.

* Croatia, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.

+ Iceland continues to be a member of the EFTA and of the European Economic Area.