



PC.DEL/299/13  
2 May 2013

**EUROPEAN UNION**

ENGLISH only

**OSCE Permanent Council Nr 950  
Vienna, 2 May 2013**

---

**EU statement on Freedom of Religion or Belief in  
Kazakhstan**

---

As a universal human right, freedom of religion or belief is a priority under the EU's human rights policy. The EU defends and promotes the principled position that freedom of religion or belief is a fundamental right to which everyone is entitled, both within and beyond the EU. The EU does not associate itself with any specific religion or belief. All must be treated equally and without discrimination in every country.

In this regard, the EU would like to recall the concern it has previously expressed about the legislation on religion adopted in Kazakhstan in October 2011. At the time, the EU agreed with ODIHR that the measures unnecessarily restricted freedom of religion or belief and urged the authorities of Kazakhstan to take into account these concerns when enacting the new legislation.

18 months later, we continue to be concerned about the impact of the legislation's implementation. We recognise Kazakhstan's efforts to promote tolerance and dialogue between world religions. At the same time, the tendency on the part of Kazakh authorities to distinguish between traditional and non-traditional religions within Kazakhstan does impact to a greater extent on members of smaller religious denominations. The EU calls on the government of Kazakhstan therefore to ensure that this distinction does not result in unequal treatment and that Kazakhstan's tradition of religious plurality remains intact.

In conclusion, the EU calls on Kazakhstan to uphold fully its obligations and commitments to protect freedom of religion and belief equally for all. We underline our conviction that efforts to prevent violent extremism and radicalism will only be effective if they meet international human rights standards and are in line with OSCE commitments.

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.