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EU statement on Freedom of Peaceful Assembly in Russia

The EU and its Member States note with concern the recent arrest of opposition leader, Alexei Navalny and his subsequent sentencing to twenty days' detention in relation to the attempt to exercise the right to freedom of peaceful assembly. We also note reports of procedural irregularities in relation to the administrative charges brought against him.

We remind the Russian Federation of our statements of 30 March and 22 June on freedom of peaceful assembly in Russia. As we explained on those two occasions, freedom of expression, of association and of peaceful assembly are the foundations on which the OSCE's human dimension commitments are built, and are at the core of our comprehensive concept of security. In Copenhagen in 1990 all participating States agreed that everyone will have the right to peaceful assembly and demonstration. Any restrictions on these rights must be prescribed by law, consistent with international standards and principles, including proportionality, and applied in line with Russia's human rights obligations.

We remind Russia of the recommendations of 2013 by the Venice Commission to appropriately adjust the Russian legislation on assemblies, meetings, demonstrations, marches and picketing and the code of administrative offences. We also note the ODIHR/Venice Commission Guidelines on Freedom of Peaceful Assembly, and the guiding principles that "a presumption in favour of freedom of peaceful assembly should be clearly and explicitly established in law", and that "it is the primary responsibility of the state to put in place adequate mechanisms and procedures to ensure that freedom of peaceful assembly is practically enjoyed".

Freedom of expression, association and of peaceful assembly are essential components of any functioning democracy. As the Russian Federation prepares

for its next cycle of elections, we remind them that public assemblies are a recognised component of the democratic process, and call on the authorities to ensure that the Russian people are able to fully enjoy this and other fundamental freedoms.

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 NORWAY, member of the European Economic Area, as well as UKRAINE, GEORGIA and CANADA align themselves with this statement.

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