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## **STATEMENT BY THE EUROPEAN UNION AT THE 745th MEETING OF THE OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

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### **Declaration by the European Union concerning individual Uzbek cases**

The European Union would like to draw the attention of the Permanent Council to the declaration by the Presidency on behalf of the European Union of 16 December 2008 concerning individual cases in Uzbekistan.

“Further to the decision taken by the General Affairs and External Relations Council on 13 October 2008, the European Union welcomed the release of two Uzbek human rights defenders, Mr. Dilmurod Mukhiddinov and Mr. Mamarajab Nazarov, and the fact that Ms. Tadjibaeva, the well-known human rights defender on conditional release, had been given permission to travel abroad.

The European Union now reiterates its deep concern at the recent ten-year prison sentences, both confirmed on appeal, handed down to Mr. Salijon Abdurakhmanov, an independent journalist, and Mr. Agzam Turgunov, a human rights defender.

The European Union urgently calls on the Uzbek authorities to respect the obligation to protect prisoners against maltreatment and to investigate thoroughly the claims made by Mr. Salijon Abdurakhmanov and Mr. Agzam Turgunov.

In this year when the 60th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights is being celebrated, the European Union expects the Uzbek authorities to free Mr. Salijon Abdurakhmanov and Mr. Agzam Turgunov, together with all other human rights defenders and prisoners to whose situation the European Union has on several occasions drawn their attention, and to cease all acts of harassment against human rights defenders”.

The candidate countries Croatia and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia\*, the countries of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidate countries Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro and Serbia, the European Free Trade Association countries and members of the European Economic Area Iceland and Norway, as well as the Republic of Moldova, align themselves with this statement.

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