



Slovensko predsedstvo EU 2008
Slovenian Presidency of the EU 2008
La Présidence slovène de l'UE 2008

PC.DEL/46/08
24 January 2008

ENGLISH only

Slovenian Presidency of the Council of the European Union

**Permanent Council No. 697
24 January 2008**

Declaration by the Presidency on behalf of the European Union on the closure of the regional offices of the British Council in the Russian Federation

I would like to draw the attention of the participating States to the following Declaration by the Presidency on behalf of the European Union, issued on the 21st of January 2008:

"The EU is very concerned at Russia's continued demand to close the regional offices of the British Council in St Petersburg and Yekaterinburg, and recalls its statement of 21 December 2007 on this issue. The EU deeply regrets in particular the harassment of British Council staff, as well as the administrative and other measures announced by the Russian authorities. These actions are contrary to the spirit of the cultural cooperation Russia agreed to pursue at the first EU-Russia Permanent Partnership Council on Culture on 25 October 2007 in Lisbon.

The EU again underlines the valuable and important role that the British Council, as well as all other cultural institutes of EU Member States in Russia, play in fostering cooperation between the Russian Federation and the EU. Cultural institutes form an essential element for the mutual knowledge of peoples and cultures, and should be strongly supported. They are also key to developing EU-Russia cultural relations under the EU-Russia Partnership and Cooperation Agreement.

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The EU urges the Russian Federation to allow the British Council to operate freely and effectively in Russia and to take no further actions that might hinder its activities.

The candidate countries Croatia* and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia*, the countries of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidate countries Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Montenegro, the European Free Trade Association country and member of the European Economic Area Norway, as well as Georgia align themselves with this declaration.

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

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