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## **STATEMENT BY THE EUROPEAN UNION AT THE 914th MEETING OF THE OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

Vienna, 31 May 2012

### **Regarding respect for the rights of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender persons**

Following the discussions that took place during the last Permanent Council meeting, the European Union would like to point out that human rights apply equally to every human being under Article 1 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which states that “all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights”, and Article 2, which maintains that “everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration, without distinction of any kind, such as race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status”.

The European Union rejects in the strongest possible terms any attempt at calling into question the universality of human rights. It attaches great importance to combating all forms of discrimination. This principle is also inscribed in the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union. That document prohibits any discrimination whether it be based on sex, race, colour, ethnic or social origin, genetic features, language, religion or belief, political or any other opinion, membership of a national minority, property, birth, disability, age or sexual orientation.

Within the framework of the OSCE, we believe that the commitments undertaken by the participating States with regard to non-discrimination and fundamental freedoms must apply to everyone, including lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender persons. As Ms. Ashton underscored on the occasion of the International Day Against Homophobia and Transphobia, it is not a matter of introducing new rights but simply of ensuring that the same human rights are applied to every person everywhere without discrimination.

The European Union also rejects the argument that this question does not fall within the remit of the OSCE. Our Organization is founded on a comprehensive approach to security, including human rights and therefore the rights of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender persons.

We continue to be concerned at the manifestations of intolerance and the discrimination or even violence affecting lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender persons in many OSCE participating States.

In this regard, the European Union recalls the statement by Ms. Ashton's spokesperson circulated under reference number SEC.DEL/159/12 on the unacceptable violence directed against lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender persons in Kiev during the "Kiev Pride" event.

We also regret that the Moscow city authorities prohibited the holding of the Pride march that was to have taken place in the city on 27 May. We note that the European Court of Human Rights ruled against Russia on 21 October 2010 in the light of the repeated prohibition by the mayor of Moscow of gay rights demonstrations. The European Union also regrets that an attempt at a peaceful demonstration organized by lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender persons in Moscow on 28 May was marked by violence and numerous arrests.

In conclusion, we call on all participating States to respect the international commitments they have undertaken with regard to human rights, especially within the framework of the OSCE.

The acceding country Croatia<sup>1</sup>, the candidate countries the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia<sup>1</sup>, Montenegro<sup>1</sup>, Iceland<sup>2</sup> and Serbia<sup>1</sup>, the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidate countries Albania and Bosnia and Herzegovina, and the European Free Trade Association country and member of the European Economic Area Norway align themselves with this statement.

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

2 Iceland continues to be a member of the European Free Trade Association and of the European Economic Area.