

**STATEMENT BY THE EUROPEAN UNION AT THE
1098th MEETING OF THE OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

28 April 2016

On the case of Mr. Azimjan Askarov

On 21 April 2016, the United Nations Human Rights Committee issued a view on the complaint submitted by Mr. Azimjan Askarov, the human rights defender imprisoned in the Kyrgyz Republic since 2010, concluding that several Articles of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, to which the Kyrgyz Republic is party, had been violated. According to the Committee's experts, Mr. Askarov has been subject to arbitrary detention, torture, ill-treatment and violations of his fair-trial rights. We note, however, that the Human Rights Committee did not take up all of the complaints.

We welcome the initial reaction of the Kyrgyz Ombudsman, who accepted that the case needs to be re-examined. We are also pleased by the reaction of the Supreme Court, which recognizes Mr. Askarov's right to request it to review the case in the light of the new circumstances. Lastly, we appreciate the confirmation by the Government that it will consider the decision and respond to the Human Rights Committee by the deadline. We encourage the Kyrgyz Government to engage with the Human Rights Committee and act in accordance with its commitments and obligations under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. The European Union fully associates itself with the appeal launched by the Director of the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, namely as it would allow Kyrgyzstan to show that the rule of law must be applied equally to all of its citizens.

We should like to take this opportunity to remind you of all of the victims of the 2010 violence and we reiterate the European Union's readiness to assist the Kyrgyz Government and people, with the prospect of making Kyrgyzstan stable and prosperous for the benefit of all of its citizens.

The candidate countries the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia¹, Montenegro¹, Serbia¹ and Albania¹, the country of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidate country Bosnia and Herzegovina, and the Free Trade Association countries and members of the European Economic Area Iceland and Norway, align themselves with this statement.

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