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EU statement on Kyrgyzstan

The European Union would like to thank Deputy Minister of the Interior Nikolai Soldashenko for his report on police reform in Kyrgyzstan and for his proposals to enhance cooperation with the OSCE. We welcome his resolve to work on improving the human rights situation and inter-ethnic relations.

We firmly believe that the goals of the OSCE Police Advisory Group in assisting Kyrgyzstan to reduce inter-ethnic tensions, restoring public order and strengthening the capacities of the territorial units of the Ministry of the Interior of the Kyrgyz Republic remain relevant, especially in the South of Kyrgyzstan where there is still an urgent need to restore confidence.

We therefore regret that there has been little progress concerning the deployment of the Police Advisory Group, as mandated by PC Decision 947 following the request of Kyrgyzstan. The EU would like to thank the Conflict Prevention Centre, the OSCE Centre in Bishkek and the Head of the PAG for their continued efforts to reach agreement on the modalities and practicalities. We recall our full support for these efforts.

We remain convinced that the deployment of OSCE police advisors to the South as soon as possible would have a positive impact in helping to create an

environment in which confidence can grow and the rule of law can be strengthened.

The OSCE, through its Centre in Bishkek, has supported police reform activities for a number of years. We support the continuation also of these efforts, with the long term objective of creating a more accountable and service-oriented police force. In this regard, we urge the Kyrgyz authorities to redouble their efforts to accelerate progress on police reform. This important work is different from the tasks of a Police Advisory Group. Nevertheless, we think it can contribute to the eventual implementation of the PAG objectives and mandate. In addition, we note with interest the proposals put forward by the Deputy Minister of the Interior concerning a project aimed at enhancing human rights awareness of the Kyrgyz police.

We also recall our support for the independent international enquiry commission and look forward to the outcome.

The EU remains concerned about reports of ongoing violence, human rights violations and arbitrary arrests in Southern Kyrgyzstan. In particular, recent ethnically motivated attacks on defendants and their lawyers during court hearings demonstrate the continued need for the government and judiciary to fully carry out their respective responsibilities. In this regard, we welcome reports about improved security during some of the trials and the launch of criminal investigations into some of the attacks. There must be zero tolerance for threats and attacks against defendants, as well as against their lawyers and family members.

In an earlier PC, the European Union has voiced its dismay about the verdict regarding Azimjan Askarov. We are concerned about reports on procedural violations in the ongoing second instance trial, and we reiterate our call to the Kyrgyz authorities to fully observe due process.

Following the announcement of the final results of the Parliamentary elections on 1 November, the EU calls on parties to engage in constructive talks on the formation of a new government on the basis of the constitution. All political parties and movements, whether elected to parliament or not, should respect the law and pursue dialogue.

Finally, the European Union would like to wish Deputy Minister Soldashenko the best success in his challenging task. The EU will continue to support Kyrgyzstan on its way to stability, rule of law and democracy.

The candidate countries CROATIA*, the FORMER YUGOSLAV REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA* and ICELAND**, the countries of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidate countries ALBANIA, BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA, MONTENEGRO and SERBIA, the European Free Trade Association countries and members of the European Economic Area LIECHTENSTEIN and NORWAY, as well as the REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA and ANDORRA align themselves with this statement.

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

** Iceland continues to be a member of the EFTA and the European Economic Area.