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STATEMENT BY THE EUROPEAN UNION AT THE 737th MEETING OF THE OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL

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Declaration by the Presidency on behalf of 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 27 October 2008, concerning individual Uzbek cases.

“Further to the decision taken by the General Affairs and External Relations Council on 13 October 2008, the European Union is pleased to note the release of two Uzbek human rights activists, Mr. Dilmurod Mukhiddinov and Mr. Mamarajab Nazarov. It urges the Uzbek authorities also to release all the other human rights defenders and the prisoners to whose situation the European Union has drawn their attention on several occasions.

The European Union welcomes the fact that Ms. Tadjibaeva, the well-known human rights defender on conditional release, has been given permission to travel abroad, in particular to receive the 2008 Martin Ennals Award, which is given each year to someone who has shown particular commitment to the struggle against human rights violations.

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

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 during their trial. The European Union hopes that they can soon be freed and that they will be given the benefit of a fair appeal procedure.”

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, Montenegro and Serbia; the European Free Trade Association countries and members of the European Economic Area Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway; as well as the Republic of Moldova align themselves with this statement.

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