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**OSCE Permanent Council No. 780
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EU Statement in response to the address by the Special Envoy of the Chairman-in-Office and Alternate Minister for Foreign Affairs of Greece, H.E. Mr. Dimitris P. Droutsas

The EU congratulates the Alternate Minister for Foreign Affairs, H.E. Mr. Dimitris P. Droutsas on the assumption of his functions as Special Envoy of the Chairman-in-Office of the OSCE. We warmly welcome his address to the Permanent Council and thank him for outlining the agenda for our work in the run-up to the Ministerial Council Meeting in Athens and beyond.

We have enjoyed excellent cooperation with the Greek Chairmanship thus far in 2009 and look forward to continuing this valuable cooperation under the new Chairman-in-Office, the Prime Minister and Foreign Minister, H.E. Mr. Papandreou, and to “sailing to Athens” with him at the helm.

In the run-up to Athens, the European Union attaches particular importance to the Corfu process on the future of European security. We are committed to engage constructively and substantively in this

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process, and to work together with the CiO and other participating states towards a good outcome at the Athens Ministerial Council.

The European Union would also like to take this opportunity to welcome the Chairmanship's initiative to convene today in Vienna an informal 5+2 meeting on the settlement of the Transnistrian conflict, and to express our appreciation of the Chairmanship's continued efforts on this important issue as well as with regard to the resolution of the other protracted conflicts in the OSCE area.

The candidate countries TURKEY, 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, as well as the REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA and ARMENIA align themselves with this statement.

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