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United States Mission to the OSCE

Statement on Media Freedom in Kazakhstan

As delivered by Chargé d'Affaires Carol Fuller
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
September 3, 2009

Madam Chairwoman,

The United States shares the concern expressed in the August 11 statement of OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media Haraszti on the case of Ramazan Yesergepov, Kazakhstani journalist and editor of the weekly newspaper *Alma-Ata Info*. After a closed trial, Mr. Yesergepov was sentenced on August 8 – in a proceeding that was also closed to the public – to three years' imprisonment for allegedly disclosing state secrets and to a two-year ban on publishing a newspaper upon his release. We believe this conviction and harsh sentence are inconsistent with OSCE commitments on media freedom.

Among the most valued services journalists provide to any free and democratic society are the investigation of injustice and the exposure of corruption. We hope Kazakhstan's government will seriously consider the chilling effect this sentence will have on journalists throughout the country.

We urge the Government of Kazakhstan to conduct a review of the circumstances resulting in Mr. Yesergepov's troubling incarceration. As Kazakhstan prepares to take on the challenging leadership role of the OSCE in 2010, we look to it for endorsement of and leadership on core OSCE values and basic human rights such as freedom of expression.

Thank you, Madam Chairwoman.