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Swedish Presidency of the European Union

**OSCE Permanent Council No. 772
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EU statement on Media Freedom in Uzbekistan

The EU was concerned to learn of the sentencing to 12-and-half years imprisonment of the independent journalist Dilmurod Saiid on 30 July 2009 in a trial that was held behind closed doors and without the presence of Mr Saiid's lawyer.

The EU would like to echo the call by the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media on 5 August 2009 for a thorough review of this journalist's case, which had previously been raised by Mr Haraszti in his regular report to the Permanent Council on 2 April 2009. It bears striking similarities to other recent cases in Uzbekistan where independent journalists have been arrested and convicted on criminal charges not related to their journalistic activities. We refer in particular to the arrest and conviction of Mr Salidzhon Abdurakhmanov and the arrest of Mr Kushodbek Usmonov. Taken together they could be indicative of a disturbing pattern of the use by the Uzbek authorities of criminal charges, in trial procedures which fail to meet international standards, to silence independent journalistic voices. These actions are not only incompatible with Uzbekistan's OSCE commitment to promote

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freedom of the media, they also violate its obligations with regard to upholding the rule of law.

The EU calls on the Uzbek authorities to review urgently Mr Saiid's case and to grant him the right to appeal in a new, public, trial with access to his legal representatives. In the meantime we also request that favourable consideration be given to his release from detention given his deteriorating medical condition.

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

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