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**Permanent Council No. 586  
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**EU Statement on Tajikistan: Release of Djumaboi Tolibov**

The European Union welcomes the release of Djumaboi Tolibov following the Tajik Supreme Court's decision on 28 November. Tolibov – an independent journalist who wrote an article critical of a local prosecutor – was sentenced to imprisonment for “hooliganism” and other offences, and had been detained since 24 April 2005. The European Union was closely following his case which had been brought to the attention of the Permanent Council by the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media. We appreciate the court decision as a step towards democratic progress in Tajikistan based on the rule of law.

However, the European Union remains alarmed at restrictions of freedom of the media in Tajikistan. Free media are a precondition for stable development, responsive public administration, good government and economic growth. Free media serve as an early warning system that detects problems and helps develop counter strategies at an early stage. We encourage the Tajik authorities to continue their co-operation with the Representative on Freedom of the Media and the OSCE Centre in Dushanbe in order to further promote freedom of the media.

The Acceding Countries Bulgaria and Romania, the Candidate Countries Turkey, Croatia<sup>1</sup> and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, the Countries of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidates Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia and Montenegro, EFTA country Iceland, member of the European Economic Area, as well as Ukraine and the Republic of Moldova align themselves with this declaration.

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<sup>1</sup> Croatia continues to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process