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## **STATEMENT BY THE EUROPEAN UNION AT THE 738th MEETING OF THE OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

6 November 2008

### **In response to the reports by the Co-Chairmen of the Minsk Group and the Personal Representative of the Chairman-in-Office on the Conflict Dealt with by the OSCE Minsk Conference**

The European Union welcomes the Co-Chairmen of the Minsk Group and the Personal Representative of the Chairman-in-Office on the Conflict Dealt with by the OSCE Minsk Conference, and thanks them for their reports to the Permanent Council.

The European Union particularly welcomes the meeting between the presidents of Armenia and Azerbaijan which took place in Moscow on 2 November on the initiative of President Medvedev, and which permitted a reaffirmation of the central role played by the Minsk Group in seeking a negotiated solution to the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. The European Union takes this opportunity to reiterate its full confidence in the Co-Chairmen from France, Russia and the United States of America and in their ability to advance, in all equity, the search for a political solution to the conflict, which it considers vital for the future and stability of the region.

The European Union urges the parties to give priority — in good faith — to engaging in a constructive dialogue, to which they have just committed themselves in Moscow, and encourages them to rapidly finalize the basic principles that were proposed to them in the document transmitted by the French Minister for Foreign and European Affairs, the Russian Minister for Foreign Affairs and the United States Under Secretary of State during the Madrid meeting of the Ministerial Council. In this connection, the European Union welcomes the readiness expressed by the parties to give due consideration to these proposals, which they already recognize as constituting the only fair and balanced offer available opening the way to a lasting settlement of the conflict. Thus the parties, at the highest level, have just brought to a close the sterile debate on the status of the Madrid proposals.

We also wish to express our appreciation for the work done, sometimes under difficult security conditions, by the Personal Representative of the Chairman-in-Office on the Conflict Dealt with by the Minsk Conference, Ambassador Kasprzyk, and his team. The European Union attaches great importance to the continuation without hindrance of their ceasefire monitoring activities on the line of contact and along the border between Armenia and Azerbaijan, which contribute towards reducing tensions in the conflict zone. Early last March we were able to appreciate how decisive Ambassador Kasprzyk's role had been in restoring calm and re-establishing the status quo ante.

The European Union wishes to reaffirm — something that it has already stressed on many occasions — that the efforts of the Co-Chairmen of the Minsk Group can be successful only if the parties assume their responsibilities and accept the necessary compromises. It therefore urges them once again to show the vision and courage that are absolutely necessary if an agreement is to be reached.

The European Union also reiterates its determination to work closely with the parties in promoting stability and prosperity and consolidating democracy and the rule of law in the region, and to strengthen its co-operative relations with them within the framework of the European Neighbourhood Policy. It encourages them to promote contacts between the communities and any initiative that will help to establish the climate of confidence indispensable for the establishment of lasting peace in the region.

In conclusion, the European Union reaffirms its full support for the mediation by the Co-Chairmen of the Minsk Group and for the efforts of Ambassador Kasprzyk, all directed towards seeking an overall settlement to the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict.

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 and the European Free Trade Association countries and members of the European Economic Area Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway align themselves with this statement.

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