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## **The Netherlands Presidency of the European Union**

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**Permanent Council No. 518  
22 July 2004**

**EU statement in response to  
The Secretary General of the Council of Europe  
Mr. Walter Schwimmer**

Mr Chairman, I am pleased to welcome, also on behalf of the European Union, Secretary General Walter Schwimmer to the Permanent Council, where he has once again provided us with a most comprehensive overview of the work and concerns of the Council of Europe. I would also like to take this opportunity to congratulate him, on the occasion of his last appearance in the Permanent Council, for his successful five-year term as Secretary General of the Council of Europe.

Like the OSCE, the Council of Europe has contributed to a Europe without dividing lines by its setting of norms on human rights and democracy and it will continue to promote these core values among its members.

The "three + three" OSCE-Council of Europe meetings, as recent consultations show, assure the appropriate interaction, without duplication or unnecessary competition. In the Strategy to Address Threats to Security and Stability in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century we reaffirmed our commitment to expand OSCE relations with all organisations and institutions that are concerned with the promotion of comprehensive security. The commitment to democracy, human rights and the rule of law are cornerstones of this comprehensive security as they are at the heart of the Council of Europe's own agenda. We welcome, therefore, the recent initiative of the Norwegian Chairmanship of the Council of Europe to enhance this co-operation. One example of this are the converging actions taken by the two Organisations to fight trafficking against human beings, but there are many examples in other areas such as Counter Terrorism and the Promotion of Tolerance.

Turning to regional issues, the European Union greatly values the work undertaken by the Council of Europe through its field operations and the good co-operation between them and our own Field Missions. As regards the situation in the Caucasus, the European Union fully subscribes to Mr Schwimmer's remark about the

need to tackle the issue of the unresolved conflicts that pose a serious threat to the further peaceful development of nationhood and democratic societies in Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia.

We also share the concern expressed by the Secretary General about the situation in Belarus, where the lack of progress in fulfilling fundamental OSCE principles and commitments in the field of democracy, human rights and rule of law still precludes Minsk's accession to the Council of Europe. We are still awaiting action from the Belarusian authorities to follow up the resolutions and recommendations of the Council of Europe Parliamentary Assembly on the Pourgourides Reports on "Disappeared Persons" and on "Persecution of the Press" in Belarus. We agree that the preparation of next October's elections is a test case of the Belarusian authorities' willingness to address some of these issues.

The European Union also welcomes the Third Summit of Heads of State and Government to be held in Warsaw in May 2005. We are looking at the Summit as an opportunity to further strengthen complementarity and interaction among the Council, The European Union and the OSCE.

In conclusion, Mr Chairman, democracy, the rule of law, and the protection of human rights, which are the fundamental principles on which the OSCE is based, are also the founding principles of the Council of Europe. There is more than enough scope for both organisations, in their different ways and through their different mechanisms, to take this vital part of the agenda forward.

Thank you again, Mr Secretary General and all the best for the future.

The Candidate Countries Bulgaria, Romania, Turkey and Croatia<sup>1</sup> align themselves with this statement.

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