



EUROPEAN UNION

OSCE Permanent Council Nr 870 Vienna, 23 June 2011

EU statement on freedom of the media in Tajikistan

The European Union is deeply concerned about the detention by the security authorities in Tajikistan of a BBC journalist, Mr Uranboi Usmonov, who has been reporting on the judicial trials and activities of Hizb-ut-Tahrir in the country. We share the concerns expressed by the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media in her 16 June press statement on the incident.

Mr Usmonov is accused of being a member of the banned radical Islamic organisation Hizb-ut-Tahrir. The BBC has issued statements saying that it has no reason to believe these allegations, and has demanded Mr Usmonov's immediate release.

The EU is specifically concerned about Mr Usmonov's state of health and about allegations of ill-treatment whilst in detention. We are also disturbed by an apparent lack of due legal process in his case, including restricted access to legal representation and to family members. It was several days before his family and lawyer were allowed to visit him and then only in the presence of Tajik security officials. We call on the Tajik authorities to provide Mr Usmonov with appropriate medical treatment and to investigate, promptly and thoroughly, any allegations of ill-treatment. We also urge the Tajik authorities to conduct an investigation into this case in full accordance with the rule of law. The EU will continue to follow this

case very closely and encourages the OSCE Office in Tajikistan to monitor the proceedings.

This is the latest in a series of disturbing incidents that cast doubt over Tajikistan's commitment to media freedom. The EU has raised concerns on several occasions in the Permanent Council over the past year or so, including on threats to media pluralism and to the safety of journalists. We encourage the Tajik authorities to work more closely with the Representative on Freedom of the Media, and to draw on the expertise and knowledge of her Office, to reverse these negative trends.

The EU supports the Tajik Government's efforts to ensure the security and stability of the country, and recognises the considerable challenge this presents. At the same time, we remind the Tajik authorities of the need to conduct their activities in accordance with their OSCE commitments, not least in respect of freedom of the media.

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

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

**Iceland continues to be a member of the EFTA and the European Economic Area.