



German Presidency of the Council of the European Union

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EU Statement in Response to the Representative on Freedom of the Media, Mr. Miklos Haraszti, 21 June 2007

The European Union welcomes Mr. Haraszti to the Permanent Council once again and thanks him for his report.

The EU attaches great importance to the work of the Representative and his office. The impartial exercise of his functions throughout the OSCE area lends credibility to his recommendations and adds weight to his reports to the Permanent Council. We welcome his attention to media freedom issues also within our own countries. A free and independent media is a cornerstone of any democratic society.

Today's report covers developments in a large number of participating States. Those Member States of the EU which are addressed by the Representative have taken careful note of his comments and will maintain close contact with his office.

We are pleased to see that the Representative is able to report positive developments in a number of participating States including Albania, Switzerland, Ukraine and the United States. We are somewhat concerned that he reports negative events in Kyrgyzstan after the positive comments on that country in his March report. On Azerbaijan and Kazakhstan the EU has recently shared its concerns about the media situation with the Permanent Council and would urge the Representative to continue his efforts to assist those countries to meet their OSCE commitments. We hope that the authorities in Russia, Serbia and Turkey will respond constructively to the concerns raised in this report. We deplore the Uzbek authorities' refusal to allow the Project Coordinator's Office to receive a shipment of OSCE publications on

freedom of the media. The free circulation of OSCE publications within their territory should be seen as a basic requirement for all participating States.

The EU has studied with interest the programme of activities undertaken since the last report and proposed for the remainder of the year. We note in particular a productive visit to Belarus this month and would again urge the Belarusian authorities to make full use of the resources and expertise offered by the Representative to bring their media environment into line with their OSCE commitments.

The EU would also like to thank the Representative and his office for the Special Report presented today on the handling of the media during political demonstrations. We would urge all participating States to pay close attention to the recommendations contained in the report. Providing independent coverage of public assemblies, such as political demonstrations or rallies, is an important function of journalists and must be facilitated. Adherence to the simple procedures and agreed guidelines suggested in the report could prevent incidents such as those which have marred the exercise of freedom of assembly and expression in a number of participating States this year.

Finally the European Union would like to thank Mr. Haraszti once again for his presentation and wish him well in his important tasks.

The Candidate Countries Croatia and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia*, the Countries of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidates Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, and Serbia, EFTA countries Iceland and Norway, members of the European Economic Area, as well as Ukraine and the Republic of Moldova align themselves with this statement.

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