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**STATEMENT BY THE EUROPEAN UNION
AT THE 925th MEETING OF THE OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

Vienna, 15 October 2012

**Regarding respect for the rights of lesbian, gay, bisexual
and transgender persons**

The European Union (EU) wishes to recall that human rights apply equally to all human beings, in accordance with Articles 1 and 2 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The EU attaches great importance to the fight against all forms of discrimination, a principle that is, moreover, enshrined in the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union and reiterated in many European anti-discrimination instruments.

Within the framework of the OSCE, we believe that the commitments assumed by the participating States with regard to non-discrimination and fundamental freedoms should apply to all, including lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) persons. We condemn the manifestations of intolerance and the discrimination affecting LGBT persons in many OSCE participating States.

In this context, the EU is particularly concerned about the adoption by the Ukrainian Parliament, on first reading, of a bill that punishes what it characterizes as “homosexual propaganda” by up to five years in prison. This statute puts the promotion of homosexuality on the same level as incitement to violence, intolerance and racism. It clearly discriminates against homosexuals and reinforces their stigmatization. Furthermore, this bill is clearly an attack on freedom of expression, including freedom of the media, as well as on freedom of assembly and association. If it were promulgated, it would conflict with Ukraine’s commitments regarding human rights, particularly its commitments under the European Convention on Human Rights and the Convention on the Rights of the Child. The EU strongly hopes that the Ukrainian Parliament will take the opportunity to correct this discriminatory approach which undermines fundamental freedoms.

The EU also expresses its deep concern over the Serbian Government’s decision to prohibit, for the second consecutive year, the holding of a gay pride march in Belgrade. This decision is contrary to freedom of assembly, association and expression. The EU recalls that it is the responsibility of each government to ensure that all citizens, without discrimination, have the opportunity to demonstrate peacefully.

The acceding country Croatia¹, the candidate countries the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia¹, Montenegro¹, and Iceland², and the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidate countries Albania and Bosnia and Herzegovina align themselves with this statement.

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

2 Iceland continues to be a member of the European Free Trade Association.