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EU statement on the Parliamentary Elections in Kazakhstan

The European Union welcomes the fact that Kazakhstan held its parliamentary elections on 15 January 2012 in a calm atmosphere. We appreciate that Kazakhstan, in accordance with its OSCE commitments, invited international observers in a timely manner and without restrictions. The European Union thanks the ODIHR, the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly and the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe for their Preliminary Findings and Conclusions issued on 16 January. We commend the International Election Observation Mission (IEOM) for its thorough and professional work. The methodology and long experience on which it is based ensure an objective assessment of the election process.

As High Representative Catherine Ashton said on 17 January, we welcome the fact that there will now be three parties represented in the Kazakhstani Parliament, which the EU sees as a positive step towards the development of a pluralistic and democratic culture in Kazakhstan. The EU notes that, according to the findings of the IEOM, the elections were technically well administered. We also note that the voting process in polling stations on Election Day was positively assessed by the observers.

We do, however, regret that the elections were found not to meet fundamental principles of democratic elections, and that the legal framework continues to include major inconsistencies with OSCE commitments and other international standards. We are particularly concerned with the fact that several parties were blocked from standing and that a party and several candidates were deregistered without due process being respected and in an unequal manner. This led to a restricted choice for citizens and hampered genuinely pluralistic elections. The EU is also concerned at the lack of transparency and respect for procedure observed by the IEOM during the counting and tabulation stages of the election process.

The restrictions to the freedom of assembly and association and to the free flow of information, noted by ODIHR during the election campaign, are also of serious concern. We share the concern voiced by the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media about the new law on television and radio broadcasting, which could violate the right of citizens to freely receive and impart information by increasing government control of electronic media. Equally, the newly-adopted law “on national security” may impair freedom of expression.

We recognise the Kazakhstani government’s stated ambition to strengthen the country’s democratic process and the commendable aim of multi-party representation in the parliament. We encourage the authorities promptly to address the recommendations in ODIHR’s final report in cooperation with ODIHR and the OSCE Centre in Astana. This would be an important step toward ensuring Kazakhstan’s compliance with established democratic standards, and its international commitments regarding democratic principles and human rights. The EU also stands ready to continue supporting Kazakhstan in the implementation of further political reforms.

The acceding country CROATIA*, the candidate countries THE FORMER YUGOSLAV REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA, MONTENEGRO and ICELAND**, the countries of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidates countries ALBANIA, BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA and SERBIA, the European Free Trade Association country NORWAY, members of the European Economic Area, as well as the REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA, and SAN MARINO 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 EFTA and the European Economic Area.