

Austrian Presidency of the Council of the European Union

**Permanent Council No. 588
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EU Statement on Uzbekistan

1. The EU remains committed to a constructive dialogue with Uzbekistan. In this context, we welcome the fact that the mandate of the OSCE Centre in Tashkent has been extended, albeit for a period of only six months.
2. The EU is gravely concerned that since the recent Supreme Court trial against 15 defendants accused of involvement in the Andijan events of May last year, more than a hundred persons have been given long prison sentences in related trials which took place behind closed doors. Regrettably, human rights organisations, ODIHR and diplomatic observers have been denied access to most of these trials, despite a commitment by the Uzbek authorities that observers would be admitted to all trials related to the Andijan events.
3. The possibility for international observers to follow these and possibly upcoming trials is particularly important due to the concerns already expressed by the EU and others that the Supreme Court trial which ended on 14 November 2005 fell well short of the standards necessary for a free and fair judicial process. We would like to recall that the Uzbek assertion that trials are closed, in order to protect state secrets, relatives of victims or witnesses, should not exclude international monitoring. As the Slovenian Chairman-in-Office pointed out in a statement in December last year, the OSCE has extensive experience from the Balkans in monitoring closed trials, keeping full confidentiality.
4. We therefore call upon the Uzbek authorities to allow international monitoring of ongoing and future trials related to the Andijan events and ask them to inform the Permanent Council about those trials that have already taken place.

5. Moreover, the EU remains committed to its call for an international independent inquiry into the Andijan events. We would welcome further discussion with the Uzbek government on the form that a credible independent inquiry could take to establish a full picture of the events of last May.

6. The EU calls upon the Uzbek authorities to cease putting pressure on human rights defenders, opposition figures and journalists. We are particularly concerned about the conviction of Mr. Zainabitdinov, a witness of the Andijan events as well as the extra charges filed against Mrs Tojibaeva.

The Acceding Countries Bulgaria and Romania, the Candidate Countries Turkey, Croatia [\[1\]](#) and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia as well as Albania, a Country of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidate align themselves with this declaration.

[\[1\]](#) Croatia continues to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process