



## **EUROPEAN UNION**

**OSCE Permanent Council Nr 870  
Vienna, 23 June 2011**

### **EU statement on Uzbekistan**

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The EU expresses its concern about the recent decision of the Uzbek Supreme Court to close the office of the international non-governmental organisation Human Rights Watch in Tashkent. The earlier refusal of accreditation by the Uzbek authorities of the Human Rights Watch Director in Tashkent, as well as his predecessor, already impeded effective operation of this NGO in Uzbekistan, as was the case for others before.

The European Union has confirmed its willingness to strengthen relations with Uzbekistan in a comprehensive manner, as set out in the Conclusions of the Council of the EU of October 2010. The level of this engagement will depend on progress by Uzbekistan in the fields of human rights, democratisation and the rule of law. The EU stands ready to continue its support to Uzbekistan in these efforts. The EU encourages the Uzbek authorities to continue to engage in the well established Human Rights dialogue with the EU, and in further co-operation in that field.

We are convinced that the sustainable development of any country is possible only if democratic institutions, the rule of law and fundamental freedoms are ensured. At the OSCE summit in Astana last December, all participating States have recognised the important role played by civil society to this end. The EU

also recalls that in the EU-Central Asia Ministerial meeting hosted in Tashkent on 7 April, all participants agreed that “the development of a strong civil society constitutes an integral part of democratic development”.

We are convinced that international NGOs such as Human Rights Watch have an important function in this respect. The EU calls upon the Uzbek authorities to create conditions that allow for the unimpeded operation of such organisations in the country.

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.