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EU statement in response to Head of the OSCE Office in Yerevan, Ambassador Sergey Kapinos

The EU warmly welcomes Ambassador Kapinos back to the Permanent Council and thanks him for his comprehensive report.

The EU supports the Office's activities in all three dimensions. We note the political and economic developments framing its activities. We are pleased to note that the Office continues to enjoy good cooperation from all its state and non-state partners.

The EU greatly appreciates the Office's monitoring of political developments, particularly those concerning the implementation of the recommendations contained in the OSCE/ODIHR report into the court trials relating to the 1 March 2008 events.

The EU has also been closely following developments around freedom of the media in Armenia. The EU made a statement on this subject, in the context of the reform of Armenia's broadcasting law, in the Permanent Council of 10 June. We have since noted that the Representative on Freedom of the Media remains concerned about some aspects of the new law and support her engagement in providing assistance to the authorities to enhance plurality of media in Armenia. We hope that the

Office will continue to work closely with the Representative on Freedom of the Media, as well as with the Council of Europe and the European Union on all these issues.

EU support for the Office's police assistance programme is well known. The EU is pleased with the results achieved so far, although, as the report notes, further improvements in areas such as police education reform and community policing are still required.

Mr Chairman,

Turning to the Second Dimension, the EU continues to welcome the support the Office has given to the development of Aarhus Centres. The EU notes the contribution these have made to the development of public debate on environmental issues at a local level. We also welcome the continued support to the national component of the Environment and Security Initiative. Across all three dimensions it is important that the activities of the Office are clearly linked to security and stability.

Mr Chairman,

On Third Dimension issues, the EU has already commented on the Office's work on freedom of the media. But we would also like to highlight our strong support for the Office's work on judicial reform, which complements considerable EU support given in this area, as well as its broad engagement to promote more inclusive governance and to

address corruption issues and challenges to the rule of law. We welcome the fact that judicial reform will be a priority area for the year ahead. We also welcome the Office's work on migration and the fight against trafficking in human beings, and its efforts to promote gender equality and to empower youth groups.

Finally, on electoral reform, we welcome the Office's work in supporting the implementation of recommendations made by successive OSCE/ODIHR election observation missions and the work of the Office to promote a broader dialogue on the amendments to the Electoral Code. With elections due in 2012 this work is particularly important. The EU very much supports the Office's proposal to prioritise this area of activity in 2011.

Before concluding, the EU would like to reiterate the importance it attaches to enhancing relations with Armenia and we invite the Armenian Government to make full use of the opportunities offered by the Eastern Partnership and the European Neighbourhood Policy.

In conclusion, the EU reiterates its strong support for the important work of the Office. We wish Ambassador Kapinos and his team well for the future and thank them for their hard work.

The candidate countries TURKEY, CROATIA*, the FORMER YUGOSLAV REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA* and ICELAND, the countries of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidate countries ALBANIA, BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA, MONTENEGRO and SERBIA, the European Free Trade Association country and member of the European Economic Area NORWAY, as well as 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.