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**Permanent Council No 559
16 June 2005**

EU STATEMENT ON KYRGYZSTAN

The European Union is closely following the situation in Uzbekistan and neighbouring Kyrgyzstan in the aftermath of the events in Andijan. We remain concerned over the situation of the affected populations and Uzbek refugees in Kyrgyzstan. We acknowledged the assurance given to us by Prime Minister Kurmanbek Bakiev, Acting President of the Kyrgyz Republic, on the occasion of his recent visit to Vienna that Kyrgyzstan will make all efforts necessary to ensure the safety and welfare of refugees and to comply with relevant international commitments.

Therefore, the European Union is alarmed by reports that Kyrgyz authorities have forcibly returned refugees to Uzbekistan. In particular, we deeply regret the apparent refoulement of four refugees to Uzbekistan on 9 June 2005 in violation of the International Convention on Refugees of 1951 to which Kyrgyzstan is a party. We expect Kyrgyzstan to comply strictly with its commitments and obligations and to work in closest co-operation with the UNHCR.

The Acceding Countries Bulgaria and Romania, the Candidate Countries Turkey and Croatia¹, as well as Ukraine align themselves with this declaration.

¹Croatia continues to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process