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EUROPEAN UNION

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EU Statement on Media Freedom in Tajikistan

The European Union is concerned that internet service providers in Tajikistan have been blocking access to selected news and social websites since 2 March 2012. The sites to have been blocked include Facebook, zvezda.ru, maxala.org, centrasia.ru and tjknnews.com. We are further concerned that internet service providers were instructed to block access to the websites by the State Communications Service of the Republic of Tajikistan.

We remind the government of Tajikistan of the report issued last year by the Representative on the Freedom of the Media which recommended that participating States refrain from mandatory blocking of content or websites. We also recall that the Declaration adopted on 30 November 2011 in Dushanbe by participants of the OSCE Central Asia Media Conference on Pluralism and Internet Governance stated that "governments should avoid blocking of the Internet as a means of interference"

The European Union believes that the internet should remain a free forum to exchange information and ideas. Blocking of websites has a negative impact on the freedom of expression thus undermining the promotion and protection of all fundamental freedoms and human rights. We therefore support the call

made by the Representative on Freedom of the Media in her press release made on 7 March that the Tajik authorities should reverse the instructions to block these websites and restore access without delay.

The acceding country CROATIA*, the candidate countries THE FORMER YUGOSLAV REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA, MONTENEGRO, ICELAND** and SERBIA, the countries of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidates countries ALBANIA and BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA, 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, Montenegro and Serbia continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.

**Iceland continues to be a member of EFTA and the European Economic Area.