



EUROPEAN UNION

**OSCE Permanent Council Nr 920
Vienna, 12 July 2012**

EU statement on amendments to the Russian NGO law

The European Union would like to draw the attention of the Permanent Council to the statement of the spokesperson of Catherine Ashton, High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and Vice President of the Commission, issued on 10 July in Brussels, in which it was stated:

"The High Representative Catherine Ashton is highly concerned by amendments to the Russian NGO law that were adopted in 1st reading in the State Duma on 6 July against the advice of the Russian President's Council on Human Rights and the Development of Civil Society.

With these revisions, Russian NGOs that receive foreign funding and are considered to be engaged in vaguely-defined political activities would be forced to present themselves as "foreign agents" in all their activities. The bill imposes further restrictions, additional administrative burdens and even possible imprisonment on them. This bill cannot be compared to any legislation or practice existing in the EU or the US.

The adoption of this NGO law comes amidst several developments that limit the space for a vibrant civil society in Russia, such as the arrests of opposition figures as well as a new law that stipulates excessive fines for administrative violations during authorised demonstrations. The EU also

closely follows the initiative to limit certain types of the content on the internet, which risks infringing upon the freedom of expression."

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 Albania and Bosnia and Herzegovina, and the EFTA country Norway, member of the European Economic Area, as well as Georgia, 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 the EFTA and of the European Economic Area.