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**OSCE Permanent Council N°1101
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EU Statement on Freedom of Assembly in Kazakhstan

The European Union takes note that many activists attempted to participate in peaceful rallies in a number of cities of Kazakhstan on 21 May 2016, raising concerns about elements of proposed amendments to the Land Code.

The EU expresses its concern about reports of a number of arrests of activists and threats to arrest them in different regions of Kazakhstan on the eve of planned rallies, the opening of criminal cases against several, and additional arrests of peaceful activists and media workers during the rallies.

The EU welcomes the subsequent release of detained journalists, and calls on the authorities to release without delay all remaining arrested peaceful activists, and to drop all criminal charges or penalties imposed on them.

The EU further remains concerned about internet and press freedom in Kazakhstan, and joins the call from the Representative on Freedom of the Media on the authorities to immediately stop the practice of mass detentions of members of the media.

The EU acknowledges that based on reporting to date, the authorities generally acted with restraint, in accordance with international norms on the handling of peaceful demonstrations.

The EU recalls that during the EU-Central Asia Ministerial meeting in Astana in December 2015 all participants agreed on the importance of strengthening the resilience of societies through good governance, including the protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms which lie at the core of the comprehensive concept of security. Freedom of peaceful assembly is an inseparable part of these human rights and fundamental freedoms, respect for which is an integral part of the

Enhanced Partnership and Cooperation Agreement recently concluded between Kazakhstan and the European Union.

The EU also recalls that the UN Special Rapporteur for freedom of peaceful assembly and association Maina Kiai visited Kazakhstan from 19 to 27 January 2015 to assess the situation of freedom of peaceful assembly and of association in the country. He recommended in his report after the visit that the Kazakhstan authorities should adopt within a specific time frame a new law on public assembly that would be in compliance with international human rights law, and to ensure that no one is subject to “preventive detention” for the exercise of the right to peaceful assembly.

The EU encourages the Kazakh authorities to also address previous OSCE/ODIHR recommendations and lift the restrictive legal provisions on freedom of assembly, in accordance with OSCE commitments, and to make use of ODIHR’s expertise and guidelines on freedom of assembly.

The Candidate Countries the FORMER YUGOSLAV REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA*, MONTENEGRO*, SERBIA* and ALBANIA*, the Country of the Stabilisation and Association Process and Potential Candidate BOSNIA and HERZEGOVINA, and the EFTA country ICELAND, member of the European Economic Area, align themselves with this statement.

* The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Albania continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.