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**EU statement on legislation on religion in Kazakhstan**

The EU has noted that on September 24, the lower chamber of the Kazakh parliament, the Majilis, passed in the second reading the draft law "On amendments and addenda to some legislative acts on freedom of religion and religious associations".

We are pleased that Kazakhstan had requested the ODIHR's expert advice, through the OSCE/ODIHR Panel of Experts on Freedom of Religion or Belief, on the draft religion law and has cooperated with the ODIHR on this matter. We welcome the fact that some changes were made to the draft to accommodate concerns raised by some experts.

However, the EU regrets that the law-making process has not been sufficiently transparent and inclusive to alleviate all these concerns. One useful step in that regard might be making public the ODIHR review of the draft legislation. The EU shares concerns about aspects of the draft legislation which seem to impose restrictions on the right to have, adopt and manifest religion or belief through association, worship or education and to increase control over religious groups and communities.

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Freedom of religion or belief is a key OSCE commitment. We note that inter-religious dialogue and religious pluralism is an area to which Kazakhstan attaches particular importance. As Kazakhstan's Chairmanship of the OSCE draws nearer, the EU encourages Kazakhstan to ensure that its legislation adequately reflects this approach, in order for it to fully live up to the country's OSCE commitments and international human rights standards.

The EU therefore calls on the Senate to reconsider the draft legislation to make sure that it is in line with Kazakhstan's OSCE commitments. We further express our hope that Kazakhstan will continue its cooperation with the ODIHR and are pleased that further consultations between ODIHR and Kazakhstan appear to be planned.

La Turquie, la Croatie\* et l'ancienne République yougoslave de Macédoine\*, pays candidats ; l'Albanie, la Bosnie - Herzégovine, le Monténégro et la Serbie, pays du processus de stabilisation et d'association et candidats potentiels ; l'Islande et la Norvège, pays de l'Association Européenne de libre-échange et membres de l'Espace économique européen ; ainsi que la République de Moldavie se rallient à cette déclaration.

\*La Croatie et l'ancienne République yougoslave de Macédoine continuent à participer au processus de stabilisation et d'association.