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## EUROPEAN UNION

### OSCE Review Conference Warsaw, 1 October 2010

#### **EU Statement – Session 1: Democratic Institutions**

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Dear Mrs. / Mr. Moderator

I am honoured to speak on behalf of the European Union.

During past decade the OSCE participating States continued addressing human dimension issues in regularly scheduled and ad hoc human dimension meetings. Yet, past years have demonstrated that greater respect for human rights and better implementation of OSCE commitments is still a matter of aspiration.

Democratic and representative institutions are at the heart of the OSCE activities. Democracy is more than just holding elections; it is a continuous commitment to a free and open debate and devoted civic society institutions that support it.

The EU believes that no sustainable progress could be achieved towards effective democratic governance without the conduct of democratic elections, as they are a key pillar of sustainable security and stability.

The EU expresses its appreciation to OSCE/ODIHR and the OSEC Parliamentary Assembly for their continuous assistance to participating States in the conduction of elections in compliance with OSCE commitments and international standards. Moreover, in order for the ODIHR to continue providing us with its expertise assistance we believe it is essential that it retains its impartial mandate and autonomy as the recommendations by ODIHR are of great value. The EU urges all participating states to invite ODIHR to convene a needs assessment and to observe their elections in accordance with their commitments and without restrictions.

The EU remains concerned that limitations to conduct democratic elections still exist in some participating States. Trends of shortcomings from year to year remain the same: limitations of the right to be elected, lack of freedom in election campaign, limits on access and coverage of media, tabulation of votes, voter registration, election administration; inefficient appeal processes, limitations imposed on the number of domestic and international observers.

The EU strongly believes that the role of civic society and opposition is vital as a mirror of a healthy governance of societies and States, which is based on as wide as possible participation of public. NGOs provide unparalleled sources of expertise and advice and are the true guarantors of democracy. Civic society and political parties can only be effective where they have freedom of assembly and association. The EU emphasizes the importance of the involvement of citizens in governance in a continuous manner and urges the participating States to ensure access of domestic NGOs and opposition parties to observe elections on local and national level. We all

have to be transparent, invite ODIHR and benefit from their observations and recommendations.

The EU notes that the commitments of participating States to follow up on ODIHR's recommendations remain for the most part unfulfilled. In Istanbul (1999) participating States committed themselves to "follow up promptly the OSCE/ODIHR's election assessment and recommendations". We commend the countries to present their follow up results to the Permanent Council, and we should establish this as a regular practice.

The EU also believes in the need to consider new election-related commitments taking into account new realities. Among these: new technologies and media, low participation of public in electoral processes, need for transparency of electoral campaigns, decrease of number of political parties, need to raise public trust in elections as manifestation of their political will.

In this regard the EU notes with appreciation the Kazakh OSCE Chairmanship for organizing the expert seminar which took place in Vienna on 16-17 September on Electronic Voting and provided a good platform to discuss the existing international standards and to share the best practices in this area.

Let me finish by thanking the Kazakh Chairmanship and the OSCE ODIHR for organizing this review conference and Poland for hosting it. The European Union welcomes the opportunity provided by this event to

exchange information and to discuss openly and frankly process of democracy throughout the OSCE region. We also thank keynote speakers for their interesting presentations and look forward to important contributions by representatives of civil society to our today's discussion.

Thank you for your attention.

The candidate countries TURKEY, CROATIA\*, the FORMER YUGOSLAV REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA\* and ICELAND\*\*, the countries of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidate countries ALBANIA, BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA, MONTENEGRO and SERBIA, as well as UKRAINE, the REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA, GEORGIA, ANDORRA and SAN MARINO align themselves with this statement.

\*Croatia and the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.

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