



Permanent Mission  
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## German Presidency of the Council of the European Union

### **655<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Permanent Council**

**10 May 2007**

### Statement of the European Union in response to the Head of the OSCE Centre in Almaty, Ambassador Ivar Vikki

The EU warmly welcomes Ambassador Vikki back to the Permanent Council. We thank him for his comprehensive report and appreciate the fact that it provides an overview both of the Centre's activities and of more general developments in areas relevant to the Centre's mandate.

We are pleased to note the Centre's successful cooperation with both the authorities and the civil society of the host country and we are confident that this approach will continue after the move of the main office to Astana. We look forward to the swift adoption of a renewed mandate for the Centre and continue to attach particular importance to maintaining a fully operational liaison office in Almaty.

We note with interest Ambassador Vikki's positive assessment of Kazakhstan's economic development. We support the Centre's focus in the Economic and Environmental dimension on combating corruption and money laundering. This is in line with host country priorities and is necessary to sustain economic growth, as is continued progress in the areas of rule of law and administration.

We have followed carefully the work of the State Commission on the Development and Concretization of Democratic Reforms and look forward with interest to the follow-up and implementation of the proposed measures. We note Ambassador Vikki's report that Kazakhstan has launched a broad programme of democratic reforms and that there are positive dynamics for further democratisation.

As we have said before, the EU attaches particular importance in this context to the protection and promotion of human rights, freedom of the media, improvements in the electoral system in line with ODIHR recommendations, the strengthening of civil society and political pluralism and the enhancement of the judicial and law enforcement system. We note from the report that a number of concerns in these fields are being, or are due to be, addressed., We look forward to seeing concrete outcomes at an early date, which will enable Kazakhstan to develop a track record of implementation of reforms and demonstrate its commitment to our common values and principles. We would appreciate further information, from the delegation of Kazakhstan, on the timelines envisaged. We would also welcome further information on plans regarding the prison system in view of the somewhat worrying facts contained in the report regarding recent protests against prison conditions.

We welcome the Centre's programmes in the human dimension, which are designed to assist Kazakhstan in the above-mentioned fields, especially through support to implementation of the ICCPR. We agree with the Centre that it is important to support ODIHR's efforts and recall that other OSCE structures, notably the Representative on Freedom of the Media, can also offer relevant assistance. We further welcome the Centre's focus on promoting gender equality and combating trafficking in human beings.

The EU also supports the Centre's work in the political-military dimension and on cross-cutting issues. We welcome particularly the efforts dedicated to fostering democratisation. Equally we welcome the efforts promoting confidence and security building measures, including through the Almaty based Regional Arms Control Centre. We are also interested in hearing more about the Police Development Co-operation Project and look forward to discussing this and other Centre priorities during the forthcoming Programme Outline debate.

The EU is pleased to see that the Centre has been able to involve itself in some pressing shorter-term issues. This is particularly true with regard to its monitoring of the Sarsenbaiuly case, on which we note with concern the conclusion that some contradictions and vagueness remain in the evidence produced.

In conclusion, we would like to thank Ambassador Vikki and his team for their dedicated and successful work, and we wish them every success in their future activities.

The Candidate Countries Turkey, Croatia and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia\*, the Countries of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidates Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, and Serbia, EFTA country Iceland, a member of the European Economic Area, as well as Ukraine and the Republic of Moldova align themselves with this statement.

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