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**OSCE Permanent Council Nr 825
Vienna, 29 July 2010**

EU statement in response to Ms. Dunja Mijatović, OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media

The European Union warmly welcomes Ms Mijatović to the Permanent Council. We would like to begin by expressing our strong appreciation to Ms Dunja Mijatović for the impressive, expeditious and transparent manner in which she has taken up her duties as Representative on Freedom of the Media.

The EU remains concerned that the implementation of OSCE commitments on Freedom of the Media continues to deteriorate. So, we very much welcome Ms Mijatović's energy and willingness to use all the tools at her disposal to assist participating States to reverse this trend. In this context, we would like to assure Ms Mijatović and other participating States that those EU Member States which feature in the report will study the Representative's constructive comments and recommendations carefully.

In order to make good use of the expertise the Representative and her Office can offer, we urge all participating States who have not yet done so to extend open invitations to the Representative. The EU commends Albania, Belarus, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Ukraine for having done so recently. The EU assures the Representative that our doors will remain open and that we are committed to cooperating with her.

Turning now to the details of the report, the EU remains particularly disturbed by continuing acts of violence against media professionals, especially in those cases to which the Representative refers in her report. The EU urges the authorities to bring the perpetrators of such crimes to justice and to fight the climate of impunity. We are also worried about cases of various forms of harassment and intimidation of journalists as specifically referred to in the report.

Most of the countries in question have provided detailed responses to Ms Mijatović, including the EU Member States referred to in the report. We call on all participating States to act decisively to protect media workers and to investigate thoroughly all acts of violence against them.

The European Union remains concerned by a number of cases, cited by the Representative in her report, in which journalists and persons wishing to exercise their freedom of expression have been sentenced to long prison sentences based on dubious charges and who still remain imprisoned. In this light, the EU reiterates its call on the relevant authorities to revise their positions regarding the following cases: in Azerbaijan the journalist Eynulla Fatullayev and the video bloggers Emin Abdullayev (Milli) and Adnan Hacizade. In Kazakhstan the journalist Ramazan Yesergepov. In Uzbekistan the journalists Hairullo Khamidov, Dilmurod Saiid and Solijon Abdurahmanov. Another case, previously raised by the EU, is that concerning the imprisoned journalist Ernest Vardanyan, who was arrested on 7 April 2010 in the city of Tiraspol.

The EU is pleased to note that there are some welcome advances in the decriminalisation of defamation in some countries, but we are also concerned about ongoing investigations against journalists on charges of libel or defamation, as well as the continued inappropriate use of fines to penalise journalists who have been critical of public figures, in some other countries.

The Representative also points to a number of partner countries that have considered or are considering introducing new legislation in areas of relevance to media freedom. She has identified a number of deficiencies and shortcomings which may have a negative impact on media freedom. The EU calls on them to make use of Ms Mijatović's offer of assistance.

The EU welcomes the ongoing dialogue on media reform between the Representative on Freedom of the Media and Kyrgyzstan. We join the Representative in calling for action ahead of the upcoming parliamentary elections in October.

The EU supports the idea of raising professional standards of journalism and accepts that media self-regulation can be useful when independently applied. We are concerned, however, that the concept of responsible journalism might be abused by those seeking to silence critical opinion. The EU would be very interested to hear the views of the Representative on this matter.

The EU would like to welcome and express its support to Ms Mijatović's decision to make media freedom on the Internet and new media, including digital broadcasting, a focus area. The media landscape has transformed itself dramatically in recent years, especially as regards electronic media, and participating States would be much assisted by the Representative when looking at ways to adapt legislative frameworks in light of these changes whilst ensuring full compliance with OSCE freedom of media and freedom of expression commitments. New technologies call for new approaches.

In conclusion, we express our hope that an increased attention to media freedom by the participating States will contribute to increased pluralism and democracy within our societies. Finally, we wish Ms Dunja Mijatović and her team every success in their future endeavours.

The candidate countries 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 and MONTENEGRO, the European Free Trade Association country and member of the European Economic Area NORWAY align themselves with this statement.

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