



EUROPEAN UNION

**OSCE Permanent Council Nr 848
Vienna, 27 January 2011**

EU statement on Article 31 demonstrations in the Russian Federation

The EU welcomes that Russian authorities have in the past months allowed the holding of so called Article 31 demonstrations, in support of freedom of assembly.

The EU is however concerned that following the authorised demonstrations in Moscow on the 31 December, about 70 people, including prominent members of the opposition, Boris Nemtsov, Eduard Limonov and Ilya Yashin were arrested. We are also concerned about allegations of irregularities in the proceedings that have led to the imprisonment of a number of people who have participated in the authorised demonstrations.

In Astana, the Heads of State and Government of all OSCE participating States reaffirmed “that human rights and fundamental freedoms are inalienable, and that their protection and promotion is our first responsibility”. These include the freedom of expression, association and peaceful assembly, which are enshrined in the Russian Constitution and numerous OSCE commitments. The EU calls upon the Russian authorities to uphold them and stands ready to support Russia to fulfil its human rights commitments.

The candidate countries CROATIA*, the FORMER YUGOSLAV REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA*, ICELAND** and MONTENEGRO, the country of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential

candidate country ALBANIA, the European Free Trade Association country and member of the European Economic Area NORWAY, as well as GEORGIA, 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.