



EUROPEAN UNION

OSCE Permanent Council Nr 901 Vienna, 09 February 2012

EU statement on opposition activities in Kazakhstan

The EU recalls its statement in the Permanent Council on 26 January 2012 regarding the arrest of a number of opposition party members and the journalist Mr Igor Vinyavski.

On 28 January, three further opposition leaders, Bulat Abilov, Amizhan Kosanov and Amirbek Togusov, of the opposition party “Azat”, were arrested and sentenced to 15 days of administrative arrest after having organised a rally aimed at expressing disagreement with the process and results of the recent parliamentary elections. On 1 and 2 February, Oksana Makushina, the deputy editor of Golos Respubliki, was interrogated after she participated as a speaker in a press conference in support of journalist Mr Vinyavski. Furthermore, the newspaper had its equipment confiscated by the security forces.

The EU fully shares the concern expressed by the Director of ODIHR in his 1 February press release about this continuing clampdown on opposition activities in Kazakhstan following the Zhanaozen events and the parliamentary elections in January. This comes in the wake of several pieces of legislation which could restrict freedom of expression in Kazakhstan, and about which the EU has previously expressed its concern. The EU will continue to monitor the

media situation carefully, including the implementation of the recently adopted law on television and radio broadcasting which does not take into account many of the recommendations formulated by OSCE experts in the course of 2011. The EU is equally concerned about the reported blocking of several internet portals linked to the “Respublika” newspaper. Encouraging an open and effective press will only help improve the environment for long-term social, political and economic stability.

The EU is also concerned about the state of health of Mr Vladimir Kozlov, the detained leader of the opposition party “Alga!”, and seeks assurances of his safety. The EU recalls the need for transparency regarding the state of health of Mr Kozlov.

The EU recalls Kazakhstan’s OSCE commitments on democracy and human rights as well as the authorities’ stated commitment to protecting and promoting human rights, fundamental freedoms and democracy. The EU encourages Kazakhstan to make use of the expertise of ODIHR and the Centre in Astana in this regard.

The EU notes the completion of the work of the governmental commission on the restoration of Zhanaozen town led by Umirzak Shukeev.

The EU recognises the ongoing criminal investigations led by the prosecutor general’s office and reiterates its call for this work to progress transparently, with full respect for human rights, including of those detained. The EU continues to call for an open and transparent investigation that delivers a public account of the events in Zhanaozen.

The EU welcomes the recent court decision to release human rights defender Yevgeniy Zhovtis and looks forward to the early implementation of this decision.

The acceding country CROATIA*, the candidate countries THE FORMER YUGOSLAV REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA, MONTENEGRO and ICELAND**, the countries of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidates countries ALBANIA, BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA and SERBIA, the European Free Trade Association country NORWAY, member of the European Economic Area align themselves with this statement.

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

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