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STATEMENT BY THE EUROPEAN UNION AT THE 685th MEETING OF THE OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL

1 November 2007

In response to the statements by the three Personal Representatives of the OSCE Chairman-in-Office for tolerance and non-discrimination

The European Union would like to welcome Ms. Anastasia Crickley, Ambassador Ömür Orhun and Professor Gert Weisskirchen, the three Personal Representatives of the Chairman-in-Office for tolerance and non-discrimination, to this meeting of the Permanent Council and to thank them for presenting their second semi-annual report of the year.

The European Union commends the Personal Representatives for their devotion and their efforts to raise the profile of the OSCE in its work to combat all forms of intolerance.

As it has already underscored on several occasions in this hall, the European Union expects the three Personal Representatives to work to promote OSCE commitments and monitor their implementation by participating States throughout the OSCE area.

The European Union also recalls that co-ordination among the three Personal Representatives, under the aegis of the Chairman-in-Office, and their close co-operation with the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) are essential if the OSCE is to work effectively and coherently.

Mindful of Brussels Ministerial Council Decision No. 13/06, it is in an open and constructive spirit that the European Union will go about evaluating the contribution of the three Personal Representatives.

Mr. Chairman,

The subject of tolerance and non-discrimination has been at the forefront of the OSCE's activities this year, which has been marked by the Bucharest conference on 7 and 8 June, the special day on tolerance and non-discrimination at the Human Dimension Implementation Meeting and, most recently, the Chairmanship Conference on Intolerance and Discrimination against Muslims held in Cordoba. All of these discussions have shown that efforts in this area should be continued, especially those of participating States to improve the implementation of their commitments.

As far as it is concerned, the European Union is absolutely determined to combat all forms of discrimination as it has indicated on various occasions.

It is in this spirit that the European Union will continue to lend its full support to the efforts undertaken by the OSCE and that it wishes every success to the three Personal Representatives of the Chairman-in-Office in their mission.

The candidate countries Turkey, Croatia and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia*, the countries of the Stabilisation and Association Process Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, and Serbia, and the European Free Trade Association country and member of the European Economic Area Iceland, as well as Ukraine and the Republic of Moldova align themselves with this statement.

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