

Prohlášení
Statement
Déclaration

Vienna 2 April 2009

Permanent Council No.757
EU draft statement on Tajik law 'On Freedom of Conscience and Religious Associations'

The European Union takes note that, on 25 March, Tajik President Rakhmon signed into law draft legislation on freedom of conscience and religious associations, after it had passed both Houses of Parliament on 5 and 12 March respectively.

The EU notes that some, but not all, of the recommendations formulated by the ODIHR's Advisory Panel of Experts on Freedom of Religion or Belief, which considered late last year the draft law at the request of the Tajik Government have been taken into account.

Particular concerns have also been expressed by other observers, including by the UN Special Rapporteur on Religious Freedom, about the special role of Hanafi Islam, registration restrictions placed on minority religious communities, the tightening of literary censorship, constraints on children's religious activity and education, possible political interference in the activities of mosques and appointment of imams, and requirements for state permission for contact with foreign co-believers.

The EU would ask the Permanent Representative of the Republic of Tajikistan to convey to his authorities our disappointment at the

precipitate way in which this law has been passed, despite the concerns expressed by a number of members of the Tajik Parliament and representatives of religious groups, including minority religious communities

We would also encourage the Tajik authorities to take advantage of the offer of the Head of the OSCE Office in Tajikistan, Ambassador Vladimir Pryakhin, to assist the government and civil society on this issue as well as the expertise provided by the ODIHR on this and other legislative matters.

The candidate countries TURKEY, CROATIA* and the FORMER YUGOSLAV REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA*, the countries of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidate countries ALBANIA, BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA, MONTENEGRO and SERBIA, the European Free Trade Association countries and members of the European Economic Area ICELAND and NORWAY, 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.