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EUROPEAN UNION

**OSCE Permanent Council Nr 853
Vienna, 10th March 2011**

EU statement on the 15th round of Geneva discussions (4 March 2011)

The European Union reiterates its strong support for the Geneva discussions, the latest round of which took place on 4 March. Despite the persistence of difficulties and differences amongst participants, we consider the continuation of the Geneva discussions to be of utmost importance. They provide the only forum in which all sides are represented and three international actors – the European Union, the OSCE and the United Nations – work in close co-operation for the security and stability of the region. We support the OSCE's active participation in the meetings, in which good use can be made of its extensive cross-dimensional experience.

With regard to the first working group, the EU welcomes the regular work of both Incident Prevention and Response Mechanisms, which we consider important confidence-building measures. But more could be done. We join OSCE Co-Chair Ambassador Čekuolis' assessment on the need for additional confidence-building measures in the conflict-affected areas.

Regarding the second working group on humanitarian issues, the EU is pleased to note that the preparations for the implementation of several water projects have been completed, to which the OSCE contributed. However, we regret that no progress could be made on gas supplies to the Georgian region of South

Ossetia. We call on all stakeholders to engage constructively in order to advance this important issue.

The EU is looking forward to the next round of Geneva discussions scheduled for 7 June 2011.

The situation in Georgia, including its Abkhaz and South Ossetian regions, remains of concern to the EU. We reiterate our firm support for the security and stability of Georgia, based on full respect for the principles of independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity, recognised by international law. We call once again for full implementation of the EU-brokered Six Point Agreement of 12 August 2008 and its Implementing Measures of 8 September 2008, including the withdrawal of all military forces to the positions held prior to the outbreak of hostilities. We also reiterate our call for unhindered access for the European Union Monitoring Mission to the Georgian regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia as well as unhindered access for humanitarian organisations.

The EU remains convinced of the urgent need for a meaningful cross-dimensional OSCE presence throughout Georgia, in particular for the benefit of the civilian population, including a robust monitoring capacity able to operate unhindered across the administrative boundary lines. We regret that in the context of the Astana Summit no tangible progress in this regard could be made. We trust that the Lithuanian Chairmanship-in-Office will continue working towards this end, and we will fully support such efforts.

The candidate countries TURKEY, CROATIA*, the FORMER YUGOSLAV REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA*, MONTENEGRO* and ICELAND**, the countries of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidate countries ALBANIA, BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA and SERBIA, the European Free Trade Association countries LIECHTENSTEIN and NORWAY, members of the European Economic Area, as well as UKRAINE, the REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA, ANDORRA and SAN MARINO 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 the EFTA and the European Economic Area.