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EUROPEAN UNION

OSCE Supplementary Human Dimension Meeting Freedom of Assembly and Association Vienna, 9 November 2012

EU Statement – Session 3 Freedom of Peaceful Assembly and Association: the role of new technologies

The European Union welcomes the attention given to new technologies in relation to the rights to assemble and associate freely.

We should respond to developments in new technologies by reiterating that fundamental freedoms have equal effect online as offline. Technological developments not only have an impact on the way citizens exert their right to freedom of expression but also the right of assembly and association. The last few years have shown that social media can facilitate the rights of association and assembly.

The European Union believes that States have the responsibility to guarantee the free exercise of the right to freedom of peaceful assembly and association, whatever the means used to exert these rights, including with the assistance of online communications.

Technological advances will continue be a constant driver of global development. It is right and inevitable that people will increasingly use all means at their disposal to act upon their rights.

I thank you Madam Chairperson.

The Acceding Country Croatia*, the Candidate Countries the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia*, Montenegro*, Iceland+ and Serbia*, the Countries of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidates Albania and Bosnia and Herzegovina, and the EFTA countries Liechtenstein and Norway, members of the European Economic Area, as well as the Republic of Moldova, Georgia and San Marino, align themselves with this statement.

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

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