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**STATEMENT BY THE EUROPEAN UNION
AT THE 930th MEETING OF THE OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

Vienna, 15 November 2012

**In response to the reports by the three Personal Representatives of the
Chairperson-in-Office for tolerance and non-discrimination**

The European Union (EU) welcomes the three Personal Representatives of the Chairperson-in-Office for tolerance and non-discrimination, Justice Catherine McGuinness, Rabbi Andrew Baker and Ambassador Adil Akhmetov, to the Permanent Council and thanks them for their reports.

The fight against racism, xenophobia, anti-Semitism and intolerance of Christians, Muslims or members of any other religion and against all forms of discrimination is one of the EU objectives within the OSCE. On this occasion, we recall that the EU is fully committed to the freedom of belief and religion, including the possibility of changing them.

These priorities are identified in the EU Strategic Framework and Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy adopted by the Council of the European Union in June 2012. They derive from the principle of non-discrimination enshrined in the European Charter of Fundamental Rights.

The European Union is deeply concerned by the growing number of manifestations of intolerance and discrimination in all their forms as evidenced by the numerous acts of violence perpetrated again this year in the OSCE countries, including the European Union.

We welcome the action of the three Representatives aimed at promoting the OSCE commitments to combat discrimination and at monitoring the implementation of these commitments by the participating States. We believe this will be a useful addition to the central role of the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) throughout the OSCE area.

The European Union believes that the fight against all forms of intolerance requires a comprehensive approach ranging from strengthening the legal framework for combating racism to improving education, training and prevention of discrimination.

With regard to the legal framework, we commend the work organized by the ODIHR this week as part of preventing and responding to hate crime.

We believe that in its activities the OSCE should increasingly take into account manifestations of hatred and intolerance based on sexual orientation or against lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) persons. These forms of discrimination are also a violation of human dignity and must be combated.

We are committed to maintaining close co-operation between the Representatives and the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights under the aegis of the Chairmanship. Equally, we hope that the three Representatives will co-ordinate their work as closely as possible and organize joint visits. Whilst the specific nature of the types of discrimination concerned may justify an individual approach, it is important to avoid increased compartmentalization of our activities so that we can maintain efficiency and firmness in our comprehensive approach to the fight against all forms of intolerance while promoting intercultural dialogue in a spirit of openness and mutual understanding.

In conclusion, we reiterate our support for the efforts and the work of the three Personal Representatives of the Chairperson-in-Office and encourage them in their further endeavours.

The acceding country Croatia¹, the candidate countries the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia¹, Montenegro¹, Iceland² and Serbia¹, the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidate countries Bosnia and Herzegovina and Albania, the European Free Trade Association country Liechtenstein, as well as Georgia, Andorra and San Marino, align themselves with this statement.

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

2 Iceland continues to be a member of the European Free Trade Association.