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**OSCE Permanent Council Nr 825
Vienna, 29 July 2010**

EU statement in response to the Head of the OSCE Office in Astana, H.E. Ambassador Alexandre Keltchewsky

The EU warmly welcomes Ambassador Alexandre Keltchewsky back to the Permanent Council and thanks him for his insightful report.

The EU is pleased with the strategic partnership between the Centre and its host country and with the great attention paid to the OSCE by all stakeholders during this Chairmanship year. This public attention underlines the particular responsibility for upholding and promoting OSCE standards and commitments resting on the OSCE Chairmanship. We strongly support the Centre's efforts to assist Kazakhstan in this regard.

We welcome the expanded geographical reach of the Centre as well as the increased attention paid to activities with a regional component. We agree that the Almaty liaison office is particularly useful for many of these projects. We also support the Centre's close coordination with other international organizations, including co-organization of projects.

The EU supports the Centre's activities across the three dimensions. The human dimension remains a particular priority for the EU. We fully support the activities of the Centre in this dimension. We would highlight, in particular, the work to

strengthen the Office of the Ombudsman, the efforts against torture, legislative reform support and on gender equality.

We recognize the ambitious reform agenda developed by Kazakhstan's authorities in a number of long-term documents and we encourage their comprehensive implementation. We underline the need for sustained efforts to prepare and implement, transparently and in cooperation with civil society, democratic reforms and are confident that the Centre will continue to support this. Further efforts are needed as regards, *inter alia*, judicial reform, promotion of political pluralism and of civil liberties. The EU hopes that the OSCE, including ODIHR, will be able to help Kazakhstan move forward in these and other areas. In the context of the need for further judicial reform, the EU reiterates its strong concern with procedural violations in the case against human rights defender Evgenyi Zhovtis and its call for provision of a remedy.

One topic of particular concern to the EU is developments with regard to media freedom, including the use of the Internet. We hope that Kazakhstan will seek the advice of the Representative on Freedom of the Media as regards relevant legislation, including the draft Administrative Code and legislation on access to information. The EU is also concerned about the implications for freedom of speech, as well as some other OSCE standards, of the recently adopted legislation on the Leader of the Nation. We thank the Centre for its media activities and for following cases involving journalists and newspapers. We hope the Centre will be in a position to share information about these cases with participating States.

In conclusion, the EU wishes to thank Ambassador Alexandre Keltchewsky and his team for their dedicated work. The EU is encouraged by the expectation expressed by Ambassador Keltchewsky that the favourable relationship between

Kazakhstan and the Centre, as well as the reform impetus provided by the Chairmanship, will persist in the future.

The candidate countries CROATIA*, the FORMER YUGOSLAV REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA* and ICELAND, the countries of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidate countries ALBANIA, BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA, MONTENEGRO and SERBIA, the European Free Trade Association country and member of the European Economic Area NORWAY, as well as GEORGIA align themselves with this statement.

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