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**Présidence française du Conseil de l'Union européenne**

**Conseil permanent No. 739  
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**EU Response to Ambassador Alexandre Keltchewsky, Head  
of the OSCE Centre in Astana**

The EU warmly welcomes Ambassador Keltchewsky to his first appearance before the Permanent Council and thanks him for his comprehensive report.

The EU is pleased with the excellent working relationship between the Centre and the Kazakh authorities and civil society. We agree with Ambassador Keltchewsky that outreach activities designed to achieve contacts with wider circles of civil society and the media would be positive and support his intentions in that regard.

We welcome the principles of coherence, coordination, continuity and regionality identified as a basis for the Centre's activities and share the priorities outlined in all three dimensions. We also reiterate our support for the Liaison Office in Almaty, which proves useful, among other things, in providing assistance to regional cooperation in Central Asia.

Mr. Chairman, Kazakhstan's chairmanship of the OSCE in 2010 provides an important impetus for further efforts to meet all OSCE commitments, both via legislation and implementation. This has been clearly recognized by Kazakh authorities at the highest levels, in particular by President Nazarbayev at the

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OSCE Parliamentary Assembly Session held in Astana in June. We welcome Kazakhstan's continued efforts to sign and ratify important international human rights treaties. If comprehensively implemented, these will help further improve the human rights situation in the country.

In particular, we welcome Kazakhstan's stated commitment to improve its legislation and practices on inter alia registration of political parties, election procedures, media regulation and local self-government. We appreciate the detailed update given by Ambassador Keltchewsky on efforts to put these intentions into practice. In this respect, we have taken note of the adoption two days ago by the Kazakh government of a set of measures to amend legislation in these areas. We underline the need for proceeding with and concluding this work as soon as possible. In this context, the EU welcomes Kazakhstan's intention to continue to request the ODIHR expertise on draft legislation. We trust that the Kazakh delegation will continue to keep us informed about progress and the timelines envisaged, here and in Helsinki.

We recall our concern expressed in our statement from 23 October about some aspects of the draft legislation on freedom of religion or belief and our call for continued cooperation with the ODIHR also in that regard. As to media regulation we encourage Kazakhstan to fulfil the specific objectives highlighted by the Kazakh Minister of Culture and Information in her presentation to the Permanent Council in July 2007. We encourage the Kazakh authorities to seek and take into due consideration the recommendations of the Representative on Freedom of the Media. Furthermore, we hope that the lawmaking process will be conducted in a transparent manner allowing for civil society participation. We welcome in that regard the Centre's assistance to promote analyses and independent legal reviews of draft legislation and to conduct roundtables to discuss them.

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The European Union has noted with interest that the "Path to Europe" programme document has now been released. We welcome the intention expressed to strengthen cooperation with European partners and to further reform the country's political system. The document also contains interesting points on the envisaged main priorities of the programme to be developed for Kazakhstan's chairmanship of the OSCE. The European Union remains ready to respond to any further request for assistance from Kazakhstan in its preparations for the Chairmanship in 2010. We look forward to engaging with Kazakhstan in concrete areas relevant to the OSCE during the implementation phase of the Programme.

In conclusion, we would like to thank Ambassador Keltchewsky and his team for their dedicated and successful work and wish them the best of success in their future activities.

La Turquie, la Croatie\* et l'ancienne République yougoslave de Macédoine\*, pays candidats ; l'Albanie, la Bosnie - Herzégovine, le Monténégro et la Serbie, pays du processus de stabilisation et d'association et candidats potentiels ; l'Islande, pays de l'Association Européenne de libre-échange et membre de l'Espace économique européen ; ainsi que la République de Moldavie, l'Arménie et la Géorgie se rallient à cette déclaration.

\*La Croatie et l'ancienne République yougoslave de Macédoine continuent à participer au processus de stabilisation et d'association.

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