



Slovensko predsedstvo EU 2008
Slovenian Presidency of the EU 2008
La Présidence slovène de l'UE 2008

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Slovenian Presidency of the Council of the European Union

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EU statement in response to the report by the Head of the OSCE Centre in Ashgabat, Ambassador Ibrahim Djikic

The European Union welcomes Ambassador Djikic back to the Permanent Council and thanks him and his staff for their dedicated work in sometimes challenging circumstances and for his comprehensive report.

The EU is pleased to note the progress in many areas, notably in social, educational and economic reform, which the report has identified in the course of the last 12 months. We note with appreciation the engagement of the Turkmen authorities in the OSCE programmes and it is encouraging to read of the positive signals regarding the authorities' interest in expanding the range and depth of the Centre's activities across all three dimensions. The engagement of Turkmenistan in matters of regional and global importance is a further sign of the country's increasing openness in its foreign relations and willingness to respond to the goodwill and assistance offered by the international community.

When Ambassador Djikic reported to the Permanent Council in 2007, almost exactly a year ago, the EU expressed its hope that Turkmenistan would 'further intensify its efforts on democratic reforms, especially on guaranteeing adherence to internationally accepted human rights standards'. The EU continues to have concerns about the lack of substantive progress in the democratisation and political reform process. Nevertheless, we note with satisfaction the establishment of the Commission for Democracy and Human Rights, as well as the State Commission on considering

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citizens' appeals regarding the activities of law enforcement agencies. We hope that the OSCE Centre will continue to cooperate with these two bodies and to provide support to their work helping to ensure Turkmenistan's compliance with its human rights international obligations

The recent decision by the President to set up a Commission on Improvement of the Constitution is also a welcome step in the right direction and the EU looks forward to seeing progress in this area over the coming months. In this respect, the EU hopes that the authorities will take advantage of the assistance and expertise available within the Centre, and in the OSCE's Institutions, notably the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR). Furthermore, we welcome the finalisation by ODIHR of the legal review on election legislation and we look forward to receiving the response of the Turkmen authorities to the recommendations made. The EU also commends the Centre for the successful organisation of the seminar on International Standards for Democratic Elections and Election Observation and for the launch of the course on human rights at the law faculty of the state university.

More broadly, the EU encourages the Turkmen authorities to continue to build on the good relations with the Centre to enable it to develop its contact with line Ministries, other than the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, responsible for specific areas of government activity. The EU welcomes the more pro-active role that the authorities have taken with regard to project approval but regrets that a number of projects, including in areas where the Government has expressed its interest, such as border security and management, police and military reform, as well as support to Parliament and development of civic education, have not been approved.

In the area of human rights, we welcome the positive move by the President to establish a commission to monitor the implementation of international human rights instruments. The EU also commends the support offered by ODIHR to assist with the

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amendment of the NGO law. We support the Centre's willingness to work with the authorities to address some shortcomings related to fundamental freedoms (freedom of assembly, freedom of expression, freedom of religion and freedom of movement) and encourage the authorities to address these as well as other economic issues and issues related to security. Another positive development has been the release of more than 11,000 convicts in the last year, and the EU welcomes the most recent announcement of the further release of a large number of prisoners amnestied on Victory Day. We note, however, that none of those accused of involvement in the alleged conspiracy of 2002 and no human rights defenders were included in the list as benefiting from the most recent amnesty, and call on the authorities to re-examine fully the sentences against the accused who remain in prison. Parallel to this, the EU would encourage the authorities to reform the judiciary and penitentiary systems.

The EU also commends the Centre's activities to promote greater environmental awareness on issues such as water resource management, land degradation and soil contamination. Given the positive trend in the country's economic development, but bearing mind the significant dependence on natural resource revenues, it is welcome that the Centre continues to provide technical assistance in the difficult transition to a more market-based economy.

The EU acknowledges the challenges Turkmenistan faces in areas falling broadly under the first dimension, but sometimes having a cross-dimensional nature, such as combating drugs, border security (including anti-trafficking) and policing. The EU notes with great interest the willingness of the Turkmen authorities to carry out activities to ensure appropriate control over drugs, to fight illicit circulation and drug smuggling, as well as to prevent addiction. Furthermore, the active participation of Turkmenistan in the regional BOMCA/CADAP programmes is very much appreciated. We encourage the Host Country to take advantage of the Centre's willingness to

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provide assistance in these areas, as well as the OSCE's experience and lessons learned in other countries facing similar problems in Central Asia.

The EU takes this opportunity to commend the work of the EU Special Representative, Pierre Morel, and the close co-ordination between the OSCE and the EU, as the EU's Strategy for Central Asia is implemented. This was most recently demonstrated by the progress achieved in the EU Troika meeting with Foreign Ministers from the Central Asian countries in Ashgabat in April.

The EU looks forward to expressing its support for the further expansion of the Centre's activities in helping the authorities fulfil their commitments in the context of the 2009 Programme Outline discussion.

The candidate countries Turkey, Croatia* and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia*, 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 Iceland, as well as Ukraine, the Republic of Moldova and Armenia align themselves with this statement.

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

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