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**STATEMENT BY THE EUROPEAN UNION AT THE  
734th MEETING OF THE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

25 September 2008

**In response to the Annual Evaluation Report by the  
Secretary General of the OSCE on the implementation of the  
2004 Action Plan for the Promotion of Gender Equality**

The European Union (EU) thanks the Secretary General for his excellent report to the Permanent Council.

The European Union would like to take this opportunity to reaffirm its commitment to the principle of equality between men and women, and is pleased that the OSCE is continuing with the implementation of the 2004 Action Plan. The European Union applauds the efforts undertaken by the various bodies of the Organization to meet their obligations under the Action Plan. It regards the achievement of the objectives set out in the Action Plan as a collective task that must be carried out under the supervision of the Secretary General, the directors of the various institutions and the heads of the field missions, with the active support of all the Organization's staff.

Combating violence against women is one of the priorities of the French Presidency of the European Union in the area of human rights, and the EU should formulate new guidelines on this issue in the weeks to come. Decision No. 15/05, approved by the Ministerial Council meeting in Ljubljana, constitutes an important document as regards the prevention and combating of this scourge. The European Union fully supports all the efforts taken to implement that decision and particularly welcomes the efforts of the field missions, the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) and the new Senior Adviser on Gender Issues, Ms. Seftaoui. The seminar on violence against women, which will be held in Dushanbe from 20 to 22 October of this year and which will make it possible to highlight the situation in Central Asia, represents a worthy initiative that should be pursued.

The Union encourages the implementation of specific measures to ensure gender equality in the three dimensions of the OSCE. In the human dimension, the European Union welcomes all the projects devoted to women's participation in public and political life. Furthermore, it takes note of the progress achieved in developing projects to promote equal opportunities for women in the economic and environmental dimension. In light of this, the Union regrets the lack of progress in this area in the politico-military dimension, and considers it indispensable that this situation be remedied as quickly as possible. The European Union recalls Ministerial Council Decision No. 14/05 and calls for the

implementation of United Nations Security Council resolutions 1325 and 1820, specifically with regard to those aspects that have a close bearing on OSCE activities.

As for statistics regarding the distribution of men and women within the OSCE, the European Union is pleased to note that they show a clear improvement in the situation of women over the last few years. Nevertheless, there are still disparities, particularly at senior levels. In order to close this gap, the participating States, including those belonging to the European Union, must seek to put forward more female candidates for vacant posts. Similarly, the European Union would like to see more nominations and greater recruitment among qualified women for positions in the OSCE.

The EU welcomes the proposals on the stages and strategic subject-related measures aimed at promoting gender equality.

In conclusion, the European Union reaffirms its commitment to the implementation of the 2004 Action Plan for the promotion of equality between men and women, and reiterates its support for the Secretary General and his team in the efforts they are undertaking to that end.

The candidate countries Turkey, Croatia and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia\*; the Stabilisation and Association Process countries and potential candidate countries Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, and Serbia; the European Free Trade Association countries and members of the European Economic Area; as well as Ukraine, the Republic of Moldova, Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia align themselves with this statement.

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