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EU STATEMENT ON THE DETENTION OF TWO OSCE STAFF IN SOUTH OSSETIA

The EU is concerned about the detention on 12 May 2005 of two Monitoring Officers from the OSCE Mission to Georgia by armed men in the zone of the Georgian-Ossetian conflict, as described in the Spot Report by the Mission of 13 May 2005. Although the EU welcomes the action of the Joint Peacekeeping Forces command, which helped to calm the situation and led to the release of the two Monitoring Officers, we remain seriously concerned about the detention as act of intimidation and serious violation of existing agreements.

Furthermore, the EU rejects the explanation provided by the South-Ossetian Co-Chairman of the Joint Control Commission. The EU underlines that the Mission should at all times be enabled to conduct independent monitoring in line with the Mission's right of freedom of movement within the area of responsibility of the JPKF, as stipulated in the Memorandum of Understanding with the South Ossetian authorities.

Concerning the presence of unauthorised armed formations and the overall security situation in the area, the EU welcomes the fact that the site of the Dzevera reservist camp was confirmed empty by OSCE Mission Monitoring Officers and JPKF Military Observers in the beginning of May. The EU also welcomes the simultaneous dismantling of concrete block barriers from the Trans-Caucasian Highway. However, the EU remains concerned that major steps still have to be taken towards the full implementation of the demilitarization agreements reached at Sochi in November 2004 and at all subsequent JCC meetings.

The Acceding Countries Bulgaria and Romania and the Candidate Countries Turkey and Croatia¹ align themselves with this statement.

¹Croatia continues to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process