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**Permanent Council No 556  
19 May 2005**

**EU STATEMENT ON UZBEKISTAN**

The European Union is profoundly concerned with recent events in Uzbekistan, which reportedly have left hundreds of people dead and wounded. In addition, more than 500 people are said to have left their homes in order to seek refuge in neighbouring Kyrgyzstan. Our thoughts are with the people in Andijan and those who crossed the border into Kyrgyzstan. We extend our condolences to the families of all victims.

The European Union urges all sides to refrain from violence. We are particularly concerned by reports that Uzbek troops opened fire on civilian population. We urge the Uzbek authorities to show restraint in dealing with the situation, avoid disproportionate use of force and to undertake all efforts to enable a peaceful solution. Repression of dissent and discontent is wrong, and counterproductive. Only a way forward in full respect for human rights, promoting democracy and the rule of law will bring peace and stability to the region.

The European Union calls on the Uzbek authorities to immediately allow an independent, international inquiry into events in Andijan. We expect that the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and the United Nations High Commissary for Refugees (UNHCR) as well as other International Organizations will be granted unimpeded access to the area affected. The visit of Ambassadors and journalists to Andijan organised by the Uzbek Ministry of Foreign Affairs was only a first step. Objectively ascertaining what happened will require the involvement of fully independent experts.

In this respect, the EU believes that the OSCE has an important role to play. The European Union highly appreciates the immediate reaction of the OSCE Centre in Tashkent in offering assistance and advice in helping Uzbekistan in any possible way. We encourage the OSCE Centre in Tashkent to continue to keep in close contact with the OSCE Centre in Bishkek. We welcome activities of the Centre in Bishkek already under way, which are aimed at supporting the local authorities in preparing humanitarian action as the need might arise. We encourage the Uzbek authorities to make full use of the expertise of the OSCE Centre in Tashkent as well as other OSCE institutions and bodies, including ODIHR, the High Commissioner on National Minorities and the Representative on Freedom of the Media, in addressing the situation in Andijan.

The European Union remains convinced that democratic societies enabling all citizens to participate in economic development and political life are the best safeguard against conflict and instability. We re-iterate our willingness to continue and strengthen our co-operation

within the OSCE in order to set up long term strategies addressing the deeper causes for discontent in Uzbek society and to promote economic, social and political reforms.

In concluding, the European Union thanks the Chairman in Office, Minister Rupel, and his Personal Envoy, Alojz Peterle, for their prompt reaction. The EU calls for an early visit by the Chairman in Office to Uzbekistan. The European Union will continue to closely follow the situation in Uzbekistan.

The Acceding Countries Bulgaria and Romania and the Candidate Countries Turkey and Croatia<sup>1</sup> align themselves with this statement.

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<sup>1</sup>Croatia continues to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process