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**EU Response to Mr. Joao Soares, President of the OSCE  
Parliamentary Assembly**

Mr. Chairman, the EU warmly welcomes the President of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, Mr. Joao Soares, to the Permanent Council. We congratulate him on the assumption of his new office and thank him for his presentation of the Parliamentary Assembly's main activities and priorities.

The EU fully acknowledges the valuable contribution made by the parliamentarians from all 56 OSCE participating States to our organization. We strongly support the OSCE PA's longstanding commitment to a strong engagement of Civil Society in all fields of OSCE activities.

The EU appreciates the OSCE PA's engagement in promoting our common OSCE commitments, notably in the area of democratic elections, human rights and fundamental freedoms, including the protection of Human Rights Defenders, tolerance and non-discrimination, and fighting against trafficking in human beings.

We would like to highlight the quality of the OSCE PA's intensive and constructive discussions, most recently at this year's meetings in Toronto and Astana.

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In this regard, we welcome the fact that, for the first time, the OSCE PA summer meeting took place in Central Asia, which provided an excellent opportunity to draw the attention of our parliamentarians to this region, and to Kazakhstan's ongoing preparation for the 2010 OSCE Chairmanship.

Mr. Chairman, let me turn to elections observation. As stated in many previous instances, the EU attaches importance to the partnership between the OSCE PA and the ODIHR, on the basis of MC decision 19/06 and the 1997 Cooperation agreement. The EU is convinced that election observation is a common - and by no means competitive - endeavor of two partners, the ODIHR and the OSCE PA, whose complementarity is of great value. There is no question of one of them having the overall lead. OSCE's elections observation is never as strong as when both institutions co-operate with each other and speak with one single voice.

In view of the forthcoming election observation activities, we strongly appeal for the resumption of the close and constructive partnership between the OSCE PA and the ODIHR, as happened many times in the past for the benefit of our Organization and its participating States.

Mr. Chairman, in concluding, the EU would like to wish President Soares and his staff, as well as his colleagues from participating States' parliaments, every success for their future work. We are looking forward to continue our close cooperation with the OSCE PA.

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, le Liechtenstein et la Norvège, pays de l'Association Européenne de libre-échange et membres de l'Espace économique européen ; ainsi que l'Ukraine, la République de Moldavie, l'Arménie et la Géorgie se rallient à cette déclaration.

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

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