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## **STATEMENT BY THE EUROPEAN UNION AT THE 825th MEETING OF THE OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

Vienna, 29 July 2010

### **In response to the statement by Mr. Sagit Ibatullin, Chairman of the Executive Committee of the International Fund for Saving the Aral Sea**

The European Union wishes to welcome to the Permanent Council Mr. Sagit Ibatullin, Chairman of the Executive Committee of the International Fund for Saving the Aral Sea (IFAS), and thank him for his excellent speech.

This presentation has reminded us of the important link between water, food, energy and health and their direct impact on the stability, security and prosperity of Central Asia.

Since 2007, the European Union has, thanks to its Central Asia Strategy, developed a platform for the comprehensive implementation of EU policy towards Central Asia. This strategy includes a water and environmental policy and establishes a platform for co-operation between the EU and Central Asia based on two major principles. On the one hand, an approach based on the sustainable development of water usage, on the other hand, acknowledgement of the implications of water management for economic stability and regional security in Central Asia.

Mr. Chairperson,

In the face of the environmental challenges in Central Asia, numerous projects and programmes run by international, regional and bilateral organizations have seen the light of day. This global solidarity is indicative of the concern and willingness of the international community to share responsibility for environmental problems with the Central Asian countries. The involvement and investment of the Central Asian countries are conditional to the success of our common goals. International assistance can only be expressed as support for the strengthening and enrichment of projects that are being carried out by the Central Asian countries themselves.

Nevertheless, the EU believes that better donor co-ordination in Central Asia would help to avoid duplication of effort, would encourage better resource management, especially in times of financial crisis and would ensure that the funds are used to implement the objectives set.

The EU values efforts on the part of the countries of Central Asia to counter national problems associated with water. As water is a transboundary issue by nature, the European Union believes that political solutions require long-term regional co-operation.

In this regard, we welcome the aims and objectives of IFAS specified in the Joint Statement adopted by the Heads of State of Central Asia in April 2009 and we support the legal and organizational reform of the IFAS structure.

The work of the Executive Committee is worthy of note and contributes to the establishment of long-term co-operation on water issues between the countries of Central Asia, whilst at the same time maintaining productive interaction with the donor community. We would like to express our full support and are ready to share our expertise to assist the countries of Central Asia in finding long-term solutions.

In conclusion, the EU wishes once more to thank Mr. Ibatullin and to wish him every success in his further endeavours.

The candidate countries Turkey, Croatia\*, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia\* and Iceland, the countries of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidate countries Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro and Serbia, the European Free Trade Association countries and members of the European Economic Area Liechtenstein and Norway, as well as Ukraine, the Republic of Moldova, Armenia 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.