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Swedish Presidency of the European Union

**OSCE Permanent Council No. 786
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EU statement on the case against human rights defender Evgeniy Zhovtis

The EU has learnt that the complaint filed on behalf of Kazakh human rights defender and member of the ODIHR Panel of Experts on Freedom of Peaceful Assembly, Evgeniy Zhovtis, in order to protest against procedural violations made during the appeal hearing of his criminal trial was turned down by the supervisory college of the Almaty regional court on December 10. The judges reportedly found no grounds for initiating review proceedings.

The EU has expressed its strong concern twice in the Permanent Council regarding due process violations during the trial. We are very disappointed to learn that Mr. Zhovtis' domestic legal remedies have been exhausted without such concerns about lack of respect for national legislation and international standards being properly addressed.

We continue to pay particular attention to this case in view of the importance we attach to full respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, including of human rights defenders. This is

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of high importance not least due to the special responsibility of Kazakhstan on the eve of taking over the OSCE Chairmanship. We strongly call for Mr. Zhovtis' rights to be upheld in line with Kazakhstan's international commitments and obligations.

The candidate countries CROATIA* and the FORMER YUGOSLAV REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA*, the countries of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidate countries ALBANIA, BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA and MONTENEGRO, as well as the European Free Trade Association countries and members of the European Economic Area ICELAND and NORWAY align themselves with this statement.

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