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STATEMENT BY THE EUROPEAN UNION AT THE 768th MEETING OF THE OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL

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In response to the Special Representative and Co-ordinator for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings

The European Union welcomes the Special Representative, Ms. Eva Biaudet, to the Permanent Council. Resolutely committed as it is to combating trafficking, the European Union advocates in its strategy a comprehensive approach to the fight against trafficking in human beings, which must be conducted simultaneously on three fronts – prevention, protection of the victims and prosecution of those responsible.

In this context, we appreciate the commitment shown by the Special Representative in combating trafficking for the purpose of labour exploitation in the agricultural sector. The conference organized on this topic in April confirmed the relevance of a comprehensive approach in a sector where it is especially difficult to identify the victims and therefore to protect them and where prosecution is made difficult by the often very organized exploiters.

The investment made by Ms. Biaudet's office in preventing trafficking also receives our support. The saying "prevention is better than cure" also applies in this area. We hope that the conference on 14 and 15 September 2009 will be fruitful and that the evaluation report presented on that occasion will prove useful.

The European Union is pleased that two of its member States have paved the way for national assessments and is looking forward to the reports scheduled for the end of 2009 and to similar exercises in other OSCE participating States. We also appreciate that the commitment of Kazakhstan, which will hold the OSCE Chairmanship in 2010, will ensure that this process will have a long-term impact.

Firmly believing it is useful for every State to have co-ordination and reporting mechanisms specifically to deal with trafficking in human beings, the European Union underscores the efforts already made by its member States both at the national level and collectively to promote and link up mechanisms of this kind as the Czech EU Presidency did in organizing the conference in Prague in March.

The European Union would like to thank Ms. Biaudet for having mentioned the intention of the Swedish EU Presidency to mark the European Anti-Trafficking Day by holding a ministerial conference on 19 and 20 October 2009. While there is still much to be done within the European Union to improve the situation, co-operation with third countries is

also indispensable if we are to succeed in our internal efforts and we therefore propose to continue in this direction.

The European Union intends to continue to co-operate with the office of the Special Representative and Co-ordinator for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings and therefore reiterates to Ms. Biaudet its full support for the implementation of her office's projects in 2009.

The candidate countries Turkey, Croatia and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia*, 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 Iceland and Liechtenstein, as well as Ukraine, the Republic of Moldova, Armenia and Georgia, align themselves with this statement.

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