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**Prohlášení**

Statement

Déclaration

Vienna 14 May 2009

**Permanent Council No. 761****EU Statement in response to the address by the Head of the OSCE Office in Tajikistan, Ambassador Pryakhin**

The EU Would like to welcome Ambassador Pryakhin to the Permanent Council once more and to thank him for the comprehensive report he has presented both orally and in writing. It is important to point out that, following agreement on a new mandate in June last year, excellent relations between the OSCE Office in Tajikistan and the host country authorities have been firmly established and have contributed to the development of a strategic partnership in pursuit of our common objectives. The recent third meeting of the Task Force, bringing representatives of all parts of the OSCE Secretariat, Institutions and the Field Presence together with representatives of many Tajik government departments and agencies, is testament to the strength of this relationship.

The EU supports the Office's focus on the 4 priority areas highlighted in the report: border-management and security; OSCE engagement with Afghanistan; cross-border regional co-operation; and strengthening the capacity of domestic institutions and civil society to promote respect for human rights and build democratic structures. We agree that these are areas where the OSCE can act as a platform for dialogue with the broad

inclusion of all stake-holders, and assist Tajikistan in making a key contribution to regional stability.

Particular areas of interest in the coming months will be the Office's support to the authorities in preparing for the Parliamentary elections in February 2010; in responding to the challenges posed by the anticipated influx of returning labour migrants and decline in remittances; in ensuring security of energy supplies next winter; in promoting tolerance and understanding between secular and religious groups, and in tackling together the root causes that may give rise to extremism, with due respect for human rights. We would also like to commend in particular the OSCE's role in assisting the Tajik authorities in developing a National Border Strategy and look forward to hearing more in due course about the associated implementation plan. In this context, the EU also welcomes the assistance provided by the Office in establishing the regional Border Management Staff College, which will be opened at the end of May in Dushanbe.

One issue of immediate concern is the report's references to the consequences of corruption for the stability and welfare of the country. This is an area in need of urgent attention in which the OSCE can play a role and the EU encourages the Office to further promote good governance and rule of law in the country. In particular the Office – in cooperation with the OCEEA – should provide expert assistance to the Tajik Agency for State Financial Control and the Struggle against Corruption in reaching the standards expected of such an institution.

Mindful of the importance for participating States to adopt legislation consistent with OSCE commitments, the EU deplores the recent entering

in force of the Law on Freedom of Conscience and Religious Associations that contains provisions not in line with international standards. Nevertheless, we commend the Office for its engagement on this issue and welcome the undertaking from the authorities to engage in a dialogue on religious rights and to explore different means to address radicalism and violent extremism. We also strongly support the Office's involvement in promoting a more pluralistic and independent media sector as well as their activities in building the capacity of state institutions to tackle gender inequality and to combat trafficking. These are all areas where the voice of civil society plays an important part and the EU appreciates the valuable support provided by the Office to the Social Partnership Club in the framework of the Public Council, which provides an important forum for pluralist debate.

Lastly, we note with some regret that this is Ambassador Pryakhin's last appearance at the Permanent Council before the end of his assignment. We would like to express our deepest appreciation of his commitment and hard work in reshaping and developing the OSCE's Presence in Tajikistan and for his personal commitment in creating the platform for cooperation and political dialogue which we, like him, believe the OSCE is uniquely placed to provide. We wish him all the best in his future endeavours.

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, MONTENEGRO and SERBIA, the European Free Trade Association country and member of the European Economic Area ICELAND, as well as UKRAINE and the REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA align themselves with this statement.

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