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P R E S S R E L E A S E

EU-Kazakhstan Human Rights Dialogue

The European Union and Kazakhstan held the fifth round of their Human Rights Dialogue in Astana today. Discussions at the dialogue were constructive and open, with exchanges on issues of mutual concern and on the possibility of increased cooperation in the field of human rights. The Kazakh delegation was led by Irgaliyev, First Deputy Prosecutor General, and the EU delegation to the meeting was led by Elisabeth Tison, Head of the Human Rights Policy Guidelines Division in the European External Action Service.

The dialogue allowed for an exchange of views on the human rights situation in both Kazakhstan and in the EU. A broad range of issues were addressed in the meeting, including freedom of expression, the status of civil society organisations, freedom of religion or belief, the prevention of torture and women's rights. The EU raised concerns regarding a number of human rights issues in Kazakhstan, including excessive restrictions on the press, on religious groups and on civil society organisations, and made reference to individual human rights cases. The EU welcomed Kazakhstan's plan for the development of a new National Human Rights Action Plan, and agreed to consider how it might support the development of that plan. The delegations also discussed EU-Kazakhstan cooperation on human rights issues at the UN and the OSCE.

In keeping with the practice of incorporating the views of civil society in its human rights engagements with third countries, the EU Delegation to Kazakhstan held a Civil Society Seminar in Astana on 26 November, which was attended by a broad range of Kazakh civil society activists, including human rights defenders.

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The EU proposed that the next EU-Kazakhstan Human Rights Dialogue meeting take place in Brussels in 2014. The first meeting of the EU-Kazakhstan Human Rights Dialogue was held in October 2008. The European Union is engaged in dedicated human rights discussions with close to 40 countries around the world.
