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## P R E S S   R E L E A S E

### **European Union-Kyrgyz Republic Human Rights Dialogue**

The European Union and the Kyrgyz Republic held the fifth round of their Human Rights Dialogue in Bishkek today. Discussions were open and constructive, with exchanges on a range of human rights issues, and on the continuing cooperation between the EU and the Kyrgyz Republic in the area of human rights, democracy and the rule of law. The Kyrgyz Republic delegation was led by Askar Beshimov, Deputy Foreign Minister, and the EU delegation to the meeting was led by Elisabeth Tison, Head of the Human Rights Strategy and Policy Implementation Division in the European External Action Service.

The dialogue allowed for an exchange of views on the human rights situation in both the Kyrgyz Republic and in the EU. A broad range of issues were addressed in the meeting, including judicial reform, the prevention of torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment, the rights of persons belonging to minority groups, women's rights, anti-corruption policies, and good governance. The EU welcomed some very significant positive steps that have been taken by the Kyrgyz Republic government since the last Human Rights Dialogue meeting in September 2012, including the establishment of the Constitutional Chamber, the Coordination Council on Human Rights and the National Preventive Mechanism Against Torture, and the introduction of stricter penal sanctions for the crime of bride kidnapping.

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The EU expressed serious concerns at continued reports of the use of torture and ill-treatment against detainees, and stressed its readiness to support the Kyrgyz Republic authorities in their efforts to prevent torture. The sides discussed the reform of the judicial system, which still falls short of guaranteeing the right to a fair trial. The EU also raised concerns about discrimination against minority groups, attempts to introduce bills limiting NGO activity, and the mistreatment of members of the LGBTI community. The EU strongly encouraged the Kyrgyz Republic's authorities to re-examine the case of Mr Azimjon Askarov, an imprisoned human rights defender.

In keeping with the practice of fully incorporating the views of civil society in human rights dialogues, the parties discussed the detailed recommendations on fair trial procedures that were adopted at the Civil Society Seminar that was held in Bishkek in September 2013.

The next round of the EU-Kyrgyz Republic Human Rights Dialogue should be held in Brussels in 2015.

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