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## EUROPEAN UNION

### OSCE Permanent Council No 1137 Vienna, 16 March 2017

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#### **EU Statement on Human Rights defenders Elena Urlaeva and Azam Farmonov in Uzbekistan**

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In our statement on 2 March, the EU recognized the release of Mr Mukhamed Bekjanov, Mr Jamshid Karimov, and Mr. Rustam Usmanov. The European Union also encouraged the Uzbek authorities to release further prisoners of conscience.

Today we are raising our concern about the treatment of the human rights defender Ms Elena Urlaeva by law enforcement officers during her detention on 1 March 2017.

The European Union also takes note with concern of the decision of the Supreme Court of Uzbekistan's Autonomous Republic of Karakalpakstan to uphold the sentence extension of another human rights defender, Mr Azam Farmonov. Mr Farmonov was sentenced in 2006 to a term of nine years in prison. Mr Farmonov was due to be released in April 2015 but his term was extended by five years following an additional sentence. While understanding that he has not exhausted his right of appeal, we call for the consideration of humanitarian factors in Mr Farmonov's case.

Human rights defenders and civil society activists play a vital role in all societies and should be able to work unhampered, without fear and harassment. The European Union recalls that all participating States have committed themselves to protecting human rights defenders.

The Candidate Countries the FORMER YUGOSLAV REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA\*, MONTENEGRO\*, SERBIA\* and ALBANIA\*, the Country of the Stabilisation and Association Process and Potential Candidate BOSNIA and HERZEGOVINA, and the EFTA country NORWAY, member of the European Economic Area, align themselves with this statement.

\* The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Albania continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.