



EUROPEAN UNION

OSCE Permanent Council Nr 907 Vienna, 29 March 2012

EU Statement on the appeal trial of Mr Muhammad Bekjanov in Uzbekistan

The EU would like to recall its statement in the Permanent Council on 9 February 2012, in which we expressed our deep concern with the additional five year sentence of Muhammad Bekjanov, the former editor of the newspaper Erk. This sentence was based upon doubtful new charges and received only days before he was due to be released. Our conviction remains that his new sentence is politically motivated.

In view of these concerns, we are disappointed to learn that Mr. Bekjanov's sentence was upheld by the appeal court in Kashkadarya on 15 March. The calls by the international community on Uzbek authorities to ensure that the appeal be handled with full respect for national legislation and international standards thus went unheeded. This is for us a matter of profound concern.

We understand that Mr Bekjanov still has the opportunity to appeal to Uzbekistan's Supreme Court, which may review the appeal court's judgement. We therefore repeat our call on the Uzbek authorities to guarantee Mr Bekjanov's right to a fair trial in full compliance with Uzbekistan's national legislation and with international legal standards, commitments and

obligations. We appeal to the Uzbek authorities to properly conduct a thorough review of all aspects of this particular case.

The EU will continue to follow the case of Mr Bekjanov closely and repeats its call on Uzbekistan to release those detained and convicted on political grounds.

The Acceding Country Croatia*, the Candidate Countries the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia*, Montenegro*, Iceland+ and Serbia*, the Countries of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidates Albania and Bosnia and Herzegovina, and the European Free Trade Association country Norway, member of the European Economic Area, align themselves with this statement.

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

+ Iceland continues to be a member of the EFTA and of the European Economic Area.