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**EU STATEMENT ON THE PASSING OF LEGISLATION ON EXTREMISM AND THE COURT  
RULING TO DISSOLVE THE DCK POLITICAL PARTY IN KAZAKHSTAN**

The EU welcomes efforts that Kazakhstan has undertaken to strengthen the rule of law. The EU supports efforts to combat extremism but strongly emphasizes that any legislation to this end should fully respect human rights. The EU expresses its concerns that on 9 February the lower house of the Kazakh Parliament passed new legislation on counteractive measures against extremist activities which could infringe on basic human rights and fundamental freedoms. The EU notes that similar concerns were expressed by several national NGOs and international organisations. The need for a special law on combating extremism has been questioned.

The EU notes that the ODIHR, in its legal comments to the legislation, concludes that several of the key provisions raise serious concerns as to their potential far-reaching implications on a wide range of fundamental freedoms protected under the Constitution of Kazakhstan. The EU fears that the laws, due to the lack of precise definitions, may result in arbitrary decisions and uncertainty with respect to procedural safeguards.

We understand that President Nazarbayev will have to sign the laws within a 15-day period in order for the legislation to come into force. Having previously welcomed the President's earlier decisions to withdraw the draft laws on NGOs and the media respectively, the EU encourages the President to use his mandate again to stop the adoption of this legislation until the legal comments of the ODIHR have been further taken into consideration.

The EU is also concerned about the 9 February ruling of the Almaty City Court to uphold the decision of the Almaty District Economical Court of 6 January to dissolve the political party Democratic Choice of Kazakhstan (DCK) for "political extremism". The EU urges that the party is not dissolved until all possibilities of appeal have been exhausted. We expect that any future decisions in relation to the DCK will reflect the will of Kazakhstan to adhere to its OSCE commitments and the respect for a pluralist political system. Without this there will be no level playing field for the upcoming presidential elections.

The EU attaches highest importance to its cooperation with Kazakhstan within the OSCE. The EU is looking forward to continuing a valuable co-operation with the Kazakh delegation here in Vienna as well as with authorities in Kazakhstan.

The Candidate Countries Bulgaria, Romania, Turkey and Croatia<sup>1</sup> align themselves with this statement.

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<sup>1</sup>Croatia continues to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process