



**COUNCIL OF
THE EUROPEAN UNION**



Council Conclusions on Uzbekistan

*2897th EXTERNAL RELATIONS Council meeting
Luxembourg, 13 October 2008*

The Council adopted the following conclusions:

- "1. The Council recalls its Conclusions of 29 April 2008 and welcomes the progress achieved in Uzbekistan in the last year with regard to respect for the rule of law and protection of human rights. In particular, it hails the release of a number of defenders of human rights, notably that of Mrs Mukhtabar Tojibaeva. The Council welcomes the fact that she was also allowed to travel abroad for medical treatment, but hopes that she will be granted complete freedom of movement. It takes note with satisfaction of the holding of the second series of consultations on human rights on 5 June 2008 and the holding of a seminar on media freedom in Tashkent on 2 and 3 October. It also welcomes the implementation of a number of legislative and judicial reforms, in particular the abolition of the death penalty, the introduction of habeas corpus and the ratification of a series of conventions combating child labour. The Council is pleased that visits by the ICRC to prisons have resumed, and trusts that they will continue.

2. The Council nevertheless remains seriously concerned about the situation of human rights in some domains in Uzbekistan and urges the authorities to implement their international obligations fully in that regard. It calls on the Uzbek authorities to release all imprisoned human rights defenders and to cease harassment of human rights defenders; to accept the accreditation of the new Country Director of Human Rights Watch and to allow the unhindered operation of that organisation; to cooperate fully and effectively with the UN Special Rapporteurs on torture and on freedom of expression; and to revoke restrictions on the registration and operation of NGOs in Uzbekistan. The judicial reforms and reforms relating to observance of the law must be continued and effectively enforced.

P R E S S

3. The Council encourages Uzbekistan to continue progress in the direction of human rights, democratisation and the rule of law, and it is prepared to assist Uzbekistan in its reforming efforts towards that goal. The Council welcomes Uzbekistan's commitment to work with the EU on a range of questions relating to human rights, by means including an effective dialogue on human rights directed towards achieving practical results.
 4. In this context, the Council has decided not to renew the travel restrictions applying to certain individuals referred to in Common Position 2007/734/CFSP, which had been suspended in accordance with the Council's conclusions of 15-16 October 2007 and 29 April 2008. The Council has however decided to renew, for a period of 12 months, the arms embargo imposed in Common Position 2007/734/CFSP.
 5. The Council will continue, on the basis of regular reports from the Heads of Mission, to monitor and assess the human rights situation in Uzbekistan in the light of the conditions set out above and of any other action that demonstrates the readiness of the Uzbek authorities to adhere to the principles of respect for human rights, the rule of law and fundamental freedoms. "
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