



EUROPEAN UNION

OSCE Permanent Council No. 1277 Vienna, 30 July 2020

EU Statement on the passing of human rights defender Azimjan Askarov

The European Union expresses its deep regret over the death of the prominent human rights defender Azimjan Askarov, at the age of 69, in a prison in Kyrgyzstan. We express our condolences to his family and friends and we pay tribute to his human rights work.

The European Union closely followed the judicial process against Mr. Askarov since his arrest in 2010. The UN Human Rights Committee found in March 2016 that Mr. Askarov had been arbitrarily detained, held in inhumane conditions, tortured and mistreated, and prevented from adequately preparing his trial defence, and that his human rights had therefore been violated under a number of articles of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. ODIHR also noted with regret on a number of occasions serious violations of fair trial standards and the failure of the authorities to address the intimidation of defence witnesses and lawyers, or to follow up on visible signs of torture. We also expressed repeatedly our opinion on the court proceedings and called for Mr. Askarov's release, including at the OSCE Permanent Council, most recently in May of this year. We also communicated our concerns about his deteriorating health condition to the Kyrgyz authorities.

We count on the Kyrgyz authorities to clarify the circumstances of Mr. Askarov's death.

In 1990 all OSCE participating States agreed to respect: *"the right of everyone, individually or in association with others, to seek, receive and impart freely views and information on human rights and fundamental freedoms, including the rights to*

disseminate and publish such views and information", and in 1994 in Budapest they emphasized the need to protect human rights defenders. States have a responsibility to protect all individuals who strive for the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms.

The European Union continues to stand up for human rights and fundamental freedoms and to support human rights defenders. The European Union commends all individuals and organisations who work tirelessly to ensure that the participating States implement their OSCE commitments on human rights and who hold governments to account.

The Candidate Countries REPUBLIC of NORTH MACEDONIA*, MONTENEGRO*, SERBIA* and ALBANIA*, the Country of the Stabilisation and Association Process and Potential Candidate BOSNIA and HERZEGOVINA, and the EFTA countries ICELAND and NORWAY, members of the European Economic Area, as well as CANADA align themselves with this statement.

* Republic of North Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Albania continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.