



**COUNCIL OF
THE EUROPEAN UNION**



Council Conclusions on Uzbekistan

*2865th EXTERNAL RELATIONS Council meeting
Luxembourg, 29 April 2008*

The Council adopted the following conclusions:

- "1. Recalling its previous Conclusions and especially the Common Position 2007/734/CFSP of 13 November 2007, the Council welcomes the progress achieved in Uzbekistan in recent months in the promotion and protection of human rights and the rule of law, notably the abolition of the death penalty, the introduction of habeas corpus and the ratification of the ILO Convention on the Worst Forms of Child Labour. The Council looks forward to the effective implementation of these measures and stands ready to assist Uzbekistan in that regard. The Council also reiterates its willingness to strengthen cooperation with Uzbekistan in all priority areas outlined in the EU Strategy for Central Asia.
2. The Council welcomes the release by the Uzbek authorities of four human rights defenders in February 2008, namely Saidjahon Zainabidinov, Ikhtior Khamraev, Ulugbek Kattabaev and Bobomurod Mavlanov, and the cancellation of the probation period of two other human rights defenders, Gulbahor Turaeva and Umida Niazova, who were released from prison last year.
3. The Council was also pleased that the Uzbek government has reached an agreement with the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) on the resumption of visits by the ICRC to prisons in Uzbekistan. The Council will pay close attention to the effective implementation of this agreement.

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4. The Council looks forward to continuing comprehensive and results-oriented dialogue with the Uzbek authorities and in that context welcomes the Uzbek agreement to conduct a second round of the EU-Uzbekistan Human Rights dialogue in May/June this year. The Council also looks forward to the holding of an EU seminar on media freedom in Uzbekistan and encourages the Uzbek authorities to take further steps to guarantee the freedom of expression and to allow further liberalisation of mass media in Uzbekistan.
 5. Nevertheless, the Council remains seriously concerned about the situation of human rights and the rule of law in a number of areas in Uzbekistan and urges the authorities to fully implement their international obligations in that regard. In particular, the Council calls on the Uzbek authorities to take the following steps, as requested earlier by the EU: to ensure the early release of the imprisoned human rights defenders and to cease harassment of human rights defenders; to finalise without delay 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 the Media; and to revoke restrictions on the registration and operation of NGOs in Uzbekistan.
 6. With a view to encouraging the Uzbek authorities to take substantive steps to improve the human rights situation and taking into account their commitments, the Council decided that the visa restrictions for individuals listed in the annex of Common Position 2007/734/CFSP would not apply for another period of six months. After three months, the Council will review the progress made by the Uzbek authorities towards meeting the conditions set out in Common Position 2007/734/CFSP and further specified in paragraph 5 of these Conclusions, and in light of any other action that demonstrates the readiness of the Uzbek authorities to adhere to the principles of respect for human rights, rule of law and fundamental freedoms. The Council will assess the outcome of this review and present its recommendations to the Uzbek government on possible further steps to be taken in order to improve the respect of human rights and rule of law in Uzbekistan. The Council will closely and continuously monitor and assess, in light of the conditions set out above, the human rights situation in Uzbekistan and may lift, amend or re-apply the visa restrictions as appropriate."
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