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**EU-REPUBLIC OF TAJIKISTAN
COOPERATION COUNCIL
First meeting, Brussels, 13 December 2010
Press Release**

The Co-operation Council between the European Union (EU) and the Republic of Tajikistan (hereafter Tajikistan) held its first meeting on Monday, 13 December 2010 in Brussels. The EU was represented by Mr Janos Martonyi, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Hungary, chairing the meeting on behalf of the EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, and Mr Andris Piebalgs, Commissioner for Development. The Tajik delegation was led by Mr Khamrokhon Zarifi, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Tajikistan. The EU Special Representative for Central Asia, Ambassador Pierre Morel, also took part in the meeting.

On the occasion of its inaugural session, the Cooperation Council reaffirmed the commitment of both parties to see the EU-Tajikistan relations strengthen across a number of areas, especially in the context of the Partnership and Co-operation Agreement between the EU and the Tajikistan, which entered into force on 1st January 2010, and the overall framework provided by the EU Strategy for Central Asia. It welcomed progress achieved in the implementation of the EU Strategy both on regional and national basis, and commended the active contribution of Tajikistan to that end, including the hosting of a High level EU-Central Asia meeting on the Rule of Law Initiative in Dushanbe in June 2010.

The Co-operation Council provided a good opportunity to review recent economic and social reforms in Tajikistan. The EU side stressed the importance for Tajikistan to continue its efforts to fight against corruption and to improve the investment climate in the country.

P R E S S

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The Co-operation Council discussed the latest developments with regards to the security situation in Tajikistan. The EU confirmed its support to Tajikistan in its efforts to ensure the stability and security of the country and recalled the importance of respecting OSCE commitments and upholding the rule of law in this process.

The EU recalled the importance of continuing progress in democracy, rule of law and human rights, in view of the widening and deepening of bilateral relations between the EU and Tajikistan and encouraged Tajikistan to step up reforms in these fields. The EU reaffirmed its readiness to continue its support for the development of democratic institutions in Tajikistan, including in the framework of the EU Strategy for Central Asia. The EU welcomed the convening of the first two meetings of the EU-Tajikistan Human Rights Dialogue, underlining that human rights and fundamental freedoms, including freedom of expression and of religion, are essential elements in the bilateral relationship with Tajikistan.

The Co-operation Council held an in-depth discussion on the issues of water, environment and energy, in particular in their regional dimension. The Co-operation Council underlined the importance of regional cooperation in Central Asia as an effective means of conflict prevention and socio-economic development in the region. In this context, the Co-operation Council called on the Central Asian partner countries to search for a durable settlement regarding water management and energy sharing issues, which would take into account interests of all sides, and preserve good relations between countries in the region. Special attention was also given to discussion on international issues, including Afghanistan and Iran.