



## EUROPEAN UNION

### OSCE Permanent Council No 1155 Vienna, 20 July 2017

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#### **EU statement on the upheld ban of activities of Jehovah's Witnesses in Russia**

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The Russian Supreme Court on 17 July upheld its previous decision to liquidate all legal entities of Jehovah's Witnesses in Russia, terminate their activity and confiscate their property, alleging "extremist activity". The decision confirms the ban on the peaceful worship of Jehovah's Witnesses throughout the country.

This ban has already resulted in cases of criminal prosecutions against Jehovah's Witnesses, as well as police raids on their prayer halls. It has contributed to an atmosphere of hatred and stigmatization, which has led to arson attacks and other forms of harassment.

Jehovah's Witnesses, like all other members of religious groups, must be able to peacefully enjoy freedom of assembly without interference, as guaranteed by the Constitution of the Russian Federation, as well as by Russia's international commitments to international human rights standards through its membership of the OSCE and the Council of Europe. OSCE Participating States have on several occasions, including at the Kyiv Ministerial Council in 2013, emphasized the link between security and full respect for the freedom of thought, conscience, religion or belief.

The Candidate Countries the FORMER YUGOSLAV REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA\*, MONTENEGRO\* 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 UKRAINE, GEORGIA, SAN MARINO, AUSTRALIA and CANADA align themselves with this statement.

\* The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro and Albania continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.