



## EUROPEAN UNION

### OSCE Permanent Council Nr 1143 Vienna, 27 April 2017

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## EU Statement on the ban of the activities of Jehovah's Witnesses in Russia

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The decision of the Supreme Court of the Russian Federation on April 20 to ban the activities of the Administrative Centre of Jehovah's Witnesses in Russia on grounds of "extremism" could make it possible to launch criminal prosecutions against Jehovah's Witnesses for mere acts of worship.

Jehovah's Witnesses, like all other religious groups, must be able to peacefully enjoy freedom of religion or belief as well as freedom of assembly without discrimination, as guaranteed by the Constitution of the Russian Federation as well as by Russia's international commitments and international human rights standards. In this context, we welcome the statement issued on 25 April by ODIHR Director Link and the Personal Representative of the Chairperson-in-Office on Combatting Racism, Xenophobia and Discrimination, also focusing on Intolerance and Discrimination against Christians and Members of Other Religions.

The European Union continues to promote freedom of religion or belief as a right to be exercised by everyone everywhere, based on the principles of equality, non-discrimination and universality.

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 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.