

‘Rule of Law – Cornerstone of Development’

Launch of the European Union’s Rule of Law Initiative for Central Asia

**Ministerial Conference of European Union and Central Asian Countries
Brussels, 27-28 November 2008**

Joint communiqué

The Ministers of Justice of the European Union and Central Asian countries,

Aware of the importance of strengthening the rule of law as an essential condition for the development of a stable political framework, functioning of economic structures and the effective protection of human rights,

Wishing to give fresh impetus to the implementation of the European Union Strategy for a New Partnership with Central Asia adopted by the European Council on 21 June 2007,

Determined to share their experience and expertise for the implementation of legal, judicial and administrative reforms,

In accordance with the documents relating to bilateral priorities defined jointly by the European Union and the countries of Central Asia,

1. *Welcome* the European Union’s Rule of Law Initiative for Central Asia,
2. *Express their determination* to forge a close partnership with a view to fostering exchanges of experience in the legal and judicial sphere, based on current projects, and to carry out new, practical projects designed to strengthen cooperation between the European Union and countries of Central Asia,

3. *Emphasise* the importance of exchanges of experience and expertise in the context of a balanced approach, taking account of regional synergies as well as of reforms and needs of each Central Asian country, and paving the way for effective project coordination by the European Commission and European Union Member States,
4. *Express* their will to strengthen cooperation on the basis of joint projects in the framework of the concept paper on the "EU Rule of Law Initiative for Central Asia", presented during the EU - Central Asia ministerial troika in Ashgabat on 9 – 10 April 2008,
5. *Note* the importance of cooperation in the field of constitutional and administrative law as well as its enforcement,
6. *Emphasise* that basic and further training for all legal and judicial professions is vital for strengthening the rule of law, in complementarity with the European Union's initiative on education,
7. *Express their interest* in sharing experience and cooperating in the sphere of criminal law, especially on issues of criminal procedure,
8. *Express a wish* to organise regional thematic conferences in Central Asia in 2009, as a follow-up to this ministerial conference,
9. *Decide* to meet again in Central Asia in 2010 to discuss progress, review their cooperation activities, and consider practical steps to continue the European Union's Rule of Law Initiative for Central Asia.