

Benita Ferrero Waldner
European Commissioner for External Relations

Brussels, 07 October 2008
Our Ref: B815

Dear Ms. Ferrero Waldner

Subject: EU human rights policy towards Uzbekistan

In light of the upcoming General Affairs and External Relations Council on 13-14 October 2008, and following on from our letter of 21 April 2008, Amnesty International would like to reiterate its concerns about EU policy towards Uzbekistan.

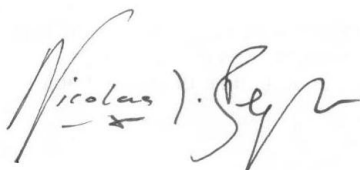
The EU should pursue a clear, consistent and assertive human rights policy towards Uzbekistan. This should maintain at its core the call for an independent international investigation into the Andizhan events of May 2005. Amnesty International holds the view that the investigations that have taken place, including the two rounds of expert talks with the EU that took place in December 2006 and April 2007, cannot substitute an independent international investigation. The expert talks did not meet the international standards for an effective, independent and impartial investigation, including the UN Principles on the effective prevention and investigation of extra-legal arbitrary and summary executions.

The call for an investigation was at the centre of the EU's decision to establish targeted sanctions on Uzbekistan in October 2005. Amnesty International was therefore highly concerned that no specific reference to this investigation was made in either the October 2007 or April 2008 decisions taken by the Council to part-suspend the sanctions. We are also concerned that the sanctions may de-facto be lifted whilst there has been no commitment from Uzbekistan to allow such an investigation. This would seriously damage the consistency and coherence of EU human rights policy.

The Council decision of October 2007 also set up additional benchmarks to evaluate human rights progress made by Uzbekistan. Amnesty International has not observed any positive changes in Uzbekistan that would suggest that the human rights situation has improved substantially. In addition, the civil society seminar held in Tashkent on 2-3 October 2008 should not be seen by the EU as an indicator of any change of attitude by the Uzbekistani authorities. Despite the clear findings presented by Amnesty International and other EU civil society participants at the seminar, there was absolutely no recognition by those representing the Uzbekistani authorities that there were any problems regarding freedom of expression, let alone any commitments to address these problems.

Amnesty International remains at your disposal to discuss this issue in greater depth.

Yours sincerely,



Dr. Nicolas Beger
Director
Amnesty International EU Office