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PC.DEL/160/21
5 February 2021

ENGLISH only



EUROPEAN UNION

**OSCE Permanent Council No. 1301
Vienna, 4 February 2021**

EU Statement on continued suppression of protests in the Russian Federation and the sentencing of Alexei Navalny

The European Union is deeply concerned that the Russian Federation continued to violently suppress peaceful protests in cities all over Russia on 31 January.

Despite the peaceful nature of the assemblies, Russian law enforcement authorities have, in a number of instances, applied disproportionate force, in some cases even against journalists, and detained far more than 5.000 individuals, including journalists and other media actors, as reported by independent observers.

Freedom of peaceful assembly, freedom of expression, and freedom of the media are enshrined in our OSCE commitments and international law. We urge the Russian Federation to guarantee these rights. In order to comply with Russia's international obligations, the authorisation requirement under Russian law must not be used to effectively put a blanket ban on protests critical of the government.

Mr. Alexei Navalny's sentencing by a Moscow court on 2 February runs counter Russia's international commitments on rule of law and fundamental freedoms. It goes against the verdict of the European Court of Human Rights, which ruled this case arbitrary and manifestly unreasonable. The EU reiterates its call for the immediate and unconditional release of Mr. Alexei Navalny, as well as all those individuals detained for exercising their rights to peaceful assembly and freedom of expression since his return to Russia.

European Commission Vice President and High Representative Borrell will travel to Moscow today to discuss the latest developments and areas of cooperation. These developments require our urgent attention.

The Candidate Countries REPUBLIC of NORTH MACEDONIA*, MONTENEGRO* and ALBANIA*, and the EFTA countries ICELAND, LIECHTENSTEIN and NORWAY, members of the European Economic Area, as well as UKRAINE and GEORGIA align themselves with this statement.

* Republic of North Macedonia, Montenegro and Albania continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.