

**PRESS RELEASE**

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**Declaration by the Presidency on behalf of the European Union  
on the case of Mr Felix Kulov**

The European Union is concerned by the circumstances surrounding the recent trial of opposition party leader Felix Kulov. The trial was marred by indications that due process has not been observed and gives cause for grave concern. Mr. Kulov was sentenced to seven years in prison and confiscation of his property by a military court in Bishkek on 22 January 2001. His lawyers have appealed the court's latest verdict. The European Union urges the competent Kyrgyz authorities to assure that due transparent process is observed in the appeal case.

Mr. Kulov had been acquitted and released in August 2000. But, the Board of the Kyrgyz Military Court decided to reconsider the case when Mr. Kulov announced that he would run in the Presidential elections, in which, however, he eventually did not participate. Mr. Kulov claims that charges against him were fabricated and have no substance. Unfortunately, the handling of the case by the Kyrgyz authorities nourished the suspicion that the case may be politically motivated.

The EU has already expressed its concerns about recent court cases against Mr. Dyrlydaev and Mr. Turganaliev. The EU is also acknowledging recent positive steps by the Kyrgyz President in the field of human rights, such as his recent decrees on better implementation of human rights standards and the creation of an ombudsman-system.

However, the EU would like to remind the Kyrgyz authorities of the importance that the EU attaches to all aspects of the human rights situation, including the treatment of major opposition persons and human rights activists.

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The EU also wants to remind the Kyrgyz authorities that the respect for democracy, principles of international law and human rights are laid down in the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement (ARTICLE 2) between the European Communities and their Member States and the Kyrgyz Republic. Therefore the EU requests the Kyrgyz authorities to provide additional information with a view to the next Cooperation Committee to be held in Brussels early March.

The Central and Eastern European countries associated with the European Union, the associated countries Cyprus and Malta, and the EFTA countries, members of the European Economic Area align themselves with this declaration.

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