



EUROPEAN UNION



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**Declaration by the High Representative, Catherine Ashton, on
behalf of the European Union regarding the recent arrest of
Dr Xu Zhiyong and other civil society activists
in China**

The European Union is deeply concerned by the arrest of Dr Xu Zhiyong on 21 August 2013, following his detention on 16 July, as well as by the detention of several other Chinese civil society activists who have in recent months publicly advocated the rule of law, transparency and social justice and campaigned against corruption. The EU welcomes the fact that the new leadership of the Peoples' Republic of China has announced that the fight against corruption and the strengthening of the rule of law are political priorities. The EU encourages the Chinese government to continue its efforts and to implement all necessary measures aimed at achieving these priorities.

The EU calls on the Chinese authorities to respect the right to freedom of expression under the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, as well as under the Constitution of the People's Republic of China, and to release Xu Zhiyong as well as all other activists who have been detained or put under house arrest for peacefully expressing their views.

P R E S S

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The Candidate Countries the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia^{*}, Montenegro^{*}, and Iceland⁺, the Countries of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidates Albania and Bosnia and Herzegovina, and the EFTA countries Norway and Liechtenstein, members of the European Economic Area, align themselves with this declaration.

^{*} The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Montenegro continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.

⁺ Iceland continues to be a member of the EFTA and of the European Economic Area.