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**Statement at the 909<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Permanent Council  
April 26, 2012**

*In response to the statements by EU and USA on the  
safety of journalists in Azerbaijan*

Mr. Chairman,

We took note of the statements delivered by the delegation of Denmark also on behalf of the European Union and the delegation of the United States of America and their texts will be duly conveyed to our relevant authorities.

With regard to the case mentioned in the statements, we would like to inform the Permanent Council of the following:

According to the information of the Ministry of Interior of the Republic of Azerbaijan, on April 18, 2012 during the demolition by the State Oil Company of illegal constructions in Sulutapa settlement of Binagadi district of Baku, about 250 protesting inhabitants of the settlement beat Fagan Yahya, Huseyn Azami, Yalchin Mammadov, Rashad Gadimov, Ilham Shahverdiyev, Musa Abuzarov and Agshin Piriyevev, all employees of the State Oil Company and injured them. During the incident Mr. Idrak Abbasov and Mr. Jamal Aliyev, inhabitants of the Sulutapa settlement were injured, too. Both of them were taken to the hospital and received necessary medical aid.

In accordance with the Order of the President of the State Oil Company dated April 18, 2012 a special commission was established to investigate and give objective assessment to the incident that took place on that day in Sulutapa. According to the Order, among other measures, "the Security department of the State Oil Company shall gather comprehensive information on the incident; information distributed in media shall be thoroughly analyzed; the employees who committed unlawful actions against journalists during the incident shall be identified".

The Presidential Administration also reacted to this incident by underlining that, "journalists should be able to perform their professional duties regardless of the

circumstances. This incident by no means represents pressure on freedom of expression and media, or confrontation between the government and media as it has been presented by some media outlets. Freedom of expression and freedom of media is a constitutional norm in Azerbaijan, the Government ensures these freedoms and will continue to do so”.

The State Oil Company investigates this incident and the results will be made public.

Let me also state that unfortunately the situation related to the freedom of media in Azerbaijan is exaggerated for political reasons. Individual cases should not be used to assess overall situation with regard to the freedom of media in the country. Emotional accents do not add credit to the authority of the OSCE Representative for Freedom of the Media, whose relevant press release was mentioned and to our partners and shall not be exploited to exert pressure. Violence against journalists is from time to time witnessed in many OSCE participating States, specifically in developed European countries, however no such emotions have been expressed towards those countries. We do believe that it is better to work constructively towards rectifying the situation instead of issuing statements with preliminary unfounded accusations.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.