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**Statement at the 854th meeting of the Permanent Council
March 17, 2011**

ENGLISH only

*In response to the statements by EU, USA and Norway
on the arrest of youth activists in Azerbaijan*

Mr. Chairperson,

We took note of the statements made by the distinguished delegations of Hungary, in the name of the European Union, of the United States of America and Norway and it will be promptly submitted to relevant authorities.

We are thankful to our partners for the interest to the developments in our country, at the same time, we'd encourage this interest be limited not only to human dimension, also embrace the issues of other 2 dimensions that our Organization covers.

Touching upon the issues raised in the statement, we'd like to underline that the right to freedom of assembly is regulated with the relevant law of the Republic of Azerbaijan. The law as amended in 2008 has passed legal expertise of the Venice Commission and ODIHR and has been positively assessed.

In accordance with the law, a person or organization intending to conduct any assembly enumerated in this law has to inform relevant body of executive power in written. Besides, due to numerous public safety reasons, special sites for rallies and demonstrations have been envisaged in this legislative act. Taking into account the fact that demonstration and rallies planned for March 11 and 12 were not sanctioned by the executive powers of Baku city, the law-enforcement had to fulfill their duties in securing public safety by not allowing unsanctioned activities to take place.

Let me underline that suggested sites for such kind of assemblies are the same for both ruling and opposition parties. Insisting on holding rallies or demonstrations in the very centre of Baku is useless taking into account the specific features of infrastructure of the city, reconstruction activities, road construction and other measures being undertaken by the Government aimed at eliminating traffic jams. Therefore, in general, any attempts to undermine

public security and political stability in the country will be duly dealt with by the law-enforcement agencies in accordance with the national legislation of the Republic of Azerbaijan.

With regard to detentions in the lead-up to the political demonstrations, these detentions were not connected to the protesters' political views or of "a pre-emptive nature". All cases of detentions were in relation with administrative and criminal charges and the necessary measures were taken by law-enforcement agencies in full compliance with the national legislation of the Republic of Azerbaijan.

Coming to the closing of some international NGOs, we'd like to state that as those NGOs didn't fully comply with the laws on NGOs and state registry of legal entities, the Ministry of Justice of the Republic of Azerbaijan had to take relevant measures. However, it should be noted that, those NGOs may bring into compatibility their registration documents with the relevant legislation of the country and continue their activity.

At the end we would like to underline that, adherence to European standards, including in the area of human rights and democratization, in light of the overall importance of European integration for Azerbaijan, remains a priority for us. Azerbaijan has chosen the way to democracy willingly and is fully committed to continue in this direction. Along with that, we object the attempts to impose any decisions, positions and opinions on our country, which contradict national legislation.

I thank you, Mr. Chairman.