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EU Statement on Azerbaijan

The European Union expresses its concern at events leading to the break-up by police of the rally held by opposition forces on 25 September in Baku, and by the Azaglig Block in Baku on October 1. The European Union calls on the Government of Azerbaijan to live up to the spirit of the Presidential Decree of 11 May and to improve freedom of assembly and expression in the country ahead of November's parliamentary elections and beyond. The EU is concerned that unnecessary constraints are being placed on the ability of opposition groups to fully exercise these rights by restricting them to limited areas to hold demonstrations. The EU calls on all parties in the forthcoming elections to conduct their campaigns in a peaceful manner. We remind all sides that there is no place for violence or intimidation in a democratic election campaign.

The Parliamentary elections of 6 November will be a decisive test of Azerbaijan's commitment to OSCE principles and values. The European Union encourages the authorities and political parties to resume urgently the dialogue on issues related to freedom of assembly they have already entered into. Therefore, the European Union regrets the failure of the meeting that should have taken place on 29th September in the premises of the OSCE Office in Baku and underlines the mediating role the Office may play in facilitating such talks.

The European Union welcomes the first interim report by the ODIHR Election Observation Mission. The interim report notes some positive trends in the election campaign thus far, including improved candidate registration procedures and candidate debates in the electronic media. But the interim report also notes some deficiencies that it hopes the Government and political parties will address over the next few weeks of the election campaign.

The Acceding Countries Bulgaria and Romania, the Candidate Countries Turkey and Croatia¹, the Countries of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidates Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Serbia and Montenegro, align themselves with this declaration.

¹ Croatia continues to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process