



PC.DEL/844/05/Corr.1
7 September 2005

ENGLISH only



**United Kingdom
Delegation**

To the Organisation for Security and
Cooperation in Europe (OSCE)
Jaurèsgasse 12
1030 Vienna

Telephone: 71613-3304
Facsimile: 71613-3900

United Kingdom Presidency of the Council of the European Union

**(Special) Permanent Council No. 568
6 September 2005**

EU Response to the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of on Azerbaijan, Mr Elmar Mammadyarov

Mr. Chairman,

On behalf of the European Union, I wish to thank the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Azerbaijan, Mr. Elmar Mammadyarov, for addressing the Permanent Council and reiterating his Government's commitment to OSCE principles and values.

The Parliamentary elections of 6 November will be seen by the international community as a decisive test of this commitment. We welcome the important decree signed by President Aliyev on May 11 2005, which reflects an awareness that the flaws of past elections should definitely be overcome. The implementation of the decree is an important step in Azerbaijan's democratic development. The European Union trusts that the instructions given by President Aliyev to public administration, with regard to holding the elections in accordance with Azerbaijani law and international standards, will be fully respected and that the result of the elections will fairly reflect the voters' decision.

The OSCE/ODIHR and the Council of Europe have recently suggested a list of amendments to the electoral code in support of our common aim of free and fair elections. While we regret that some of these suggestions (such as those concerning the composition of the Central Election Commission) have been rejected by the Azerbaijani Parliament, we hope nevertheless that free and fair elections can be achieved, notably with full implementation of the existing electoral code.

As campaigning by the candidates and parties gets underway, the European Union urges the Azerbaijani authorities to do their best to restore fully freedom of assembly and expression, guaranteeing to all candidates and political parties the right to publicize their ideas and programmes without restrictions. The European Union welcomes the progress made in allowing greater freedom of assembly in Azerbaijan but believes that the non-cooperative attitude of some local authorities towards public rallies, which has been witnessed in the past three months in various regions, must be quickly addressed. The EU shares the concern recently expressed by the OSCE Office in Baku about the activity of small groups of

citizens who organised violent and unauthorized public protests against an opposition party. We call on all parts of Azerbaijani society to refrain from violence and to contribute to a peaceful conduct of both the electoral campaign and the elections themselves.

While taking note with satisfaction that about two thousand candidates have been registered, the European Union calls on the Azerbaijani authorities to rapidly and transparently examine the pending complaints by those who were excluded from registration in order to avoid any doubt about the proper use of the registration procedures.

The European Union notes that the lists of citizens eligible to vote have now been published, according to the law. We also welcome the commitment of the Azerbaijani government to provide all voters with the necessary voting cards and identity documents and look forward to its implementation.

Concerning the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, the news that the occasion for bilateral talks at the highest level provided by the CIS meetings in Moscow and Kazan was seized is welcome. The European Union urges the parties to take full advantage of the momentum thus created and aim at concrete negotiations to advance towards a settlement of the Nagorno-Karabakh issue with the assistance of the OSCE Minsk Group Co-Chairs.

Work to develop a European Neighbourhood Policy Action Plan for Azerbaijan will be an important priority in the months ahead and will constitute an important instrument for enhancing dialogue and cooperation.

The Acceding Countries Bulgaria and Romania, the Candidate Countries Turkey and Croatia¹, the Country of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidate Albania, and the EFTA country Iceland, member of the European Economic Area, align themselves with this declaration.

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