



EUROPEAN UNION

**OSCE Permanent Council Nr 1012
Vienna, 24 July 2014**

**EU Statement on the Sentencing of Hasan Huseynli in
Azerbaijan**

The EU has learned with concern that Hasan Huseynli, leader of The Intelligent Citizen Enlightenment Centre (ICEC), has been harshly sentenced to a lengthy prison term by the Ganja Court on 14 July 2014 on alleged charges of 'hooliganism'. The ICEC is a respected NGO promoting open society, human rights and democratic ideas in the Western regions of Azerbaijan and especially encouraging civic participation of young people, successfully carrying out inter alia an EU-funded project.

Mr Huseynli was arrested in March 2014 for allegedly stabbing his neighbour following an attempt by an unknown individual to provoke a fight with Mr Huseynli. We have learnt that of the four witnesses two are reportedly police officers who, along with the victim, have recently appeared as victims in other criminal cases. We note that a third witness refused to testify and contradicted what he had said in the preliminary investigation, while a fourth witness argued that she simply reported the incident. We note that the court decided against reviewing footage from nearby surveillance cameras.

This sentencing of Mr Huseynli is part of a disturbing trend of a continued deterioration of the Human Rights situation in Azerbaijan as we stressed at last week's Permanent Council. We regret that, despite our continuous calls, the Azerbaijani authorities are continuing to clamp down on civil society and to restrict the space for public discourse, including using judicial means such as harsh sentencing. We underline that we expect Azerbaijan to act in line with its responsibility as the current chair of the Council of Europe's Committee of

Ministers and to honour the obligations and commitments to which it has subscribed as a Member of the Council of Europe.

The Candidate Countries the FORMER YUGOSLAV REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA*, MONTENEGRO*, ICELAND+, SERBIA* and ALBANIA*, and the EFTA country NORWAY, member of the European Economic Area, align themselves with this statement.

* The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Albania 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.