

European Commission reply to the Azerbaijani statement made at the 747th meeting of the OSCE Permanent Council on 22 January on the Broadcasting issue

The Delegation of the European Commission would like to thank the distinguished Azerbaijani ambassador to have drawn the attention of the Permanent Council to the visit of Commissioner Dr. Ferrero-Waldner to Baku and to her important exchanges with President Alijev and Foreign Minister Mammadyarov on 21st January 2009.

On her visit to Baku the Commissioner raised the issue of foreign broadcasters both at the meetings with President Aliyev and Foreign Minister Mammadyarov. At both meetings, Commissioner Ferrero-Waldner discussed the situation on the media freedom and the fundamental rights. She particularly stressed the EU concerns related to the decision of the Azerbaijani authorities of 30 December 2008 not to extend the licenses of foreign broadcasters to broadcast on national frequencies. The Commissioner pointed out that a solution needs to be found to enable the broadcasters to continue broadcasting as soon as possible.

On 22 January, the Azerbaijani statement in the Permanent Council claimed that Mrs Ferrero-Waldner had supported in her talks on 21 January with the Foreign Minister in Baku the position of Azerbaijan, according to which Azerbaijan had not violated its commitments on media freedom when revoking the licences from the foreign broadcasters. An EU Statement on the issue was made earlier on 22 January in the Permanent Council, regretting the Azerbaijani authorities' decision not to renew the FM radio licenses of a number of international broadcasters (namely the BBC World Service, Voice of America and Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty), and urging Azerbaijan to reconsider this decision. There is no shadow of doubt the European Commission remains fully associated with this statement and continues to support renewed licenses as soon as possible.

A press statement by Commissioner Benita Ferrero-Waldner, reiterating this position will be issued shortly.