

**Statement by the Permanent Representative of Turkey  
in response to the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Azerbaijan H.E. Elmar Memmedyarov  
(Special) Meeting of the Permanent Council, 6 September 2005**

I join the previous speakers to warmly welcome the Minister and thank him for being here with us.

I hope what I am going to state would make it self explanatory as to why, in addition to aligning ourselves with the EU declaration, I took the pleasant duty to offer a few remarks on a national basis.

Even a cursory glance at the map will tell why the Caucasus occupies a place of vital importance in the geopolitical calculus of my country. Our legitimate interests in the region's peace, stability and growing prosperity require us not only to monitor developments but also to seek to bring our positive influence to bear on setting a mutually beneficial course to these developments. In principle, these efforts are inclusive and non-discriminating as in the case of the Black Sea Cooperation Council, which we spearheaded, unless one or the other co-regional player chooses to opt out as a sovereign choice which we respect.

In this regional setting Azerbaijan and our relations with it are special and have a strategic content. They derive from a multitude of commonalities and not least from fraternal ties embedded in kinship in ethnicity and language. These ties will grow and deepen as there exists a politically demonstrated will on both sides to do so, by seizing every opportunity that opens up for a more intimate engagement. A truly democratic Azerbaijan will be more stable and more prosperous and as such will be able to project these assets, as represented in impressive forecasts announced by the Minister, more vigorously to the whole region and beyond. This is the perspective within which we actively support the reform process in Azerbaijan in all fields. We note with satisfaction the very positive trends in economic growth as well as the developments in the democratization process. We attach importance that the preferences of the nation are reflected in the composition and complexion of all component institutions of the state and in all tiers of it. In this vein, we encourage the Government to continue its efforts in the enactment of further steps in democratic reform and accelerate the process where needed.

The November 2005 elections will be an important milestone for Azerbaijan's democracy. Confident that Azerbaijan will mark measurable progress, we will also observe the process with a number of long and short term observers. We commend the Government's as well as President Aliyev's personal efforts to secure the necessary conditions for a free and fair electoral process. However, all segments of society, including the political opposition, have a responsibility in this regard and the voluntary engagement of institutions is indispensable.

Democratization is a long term process which needs patience and determination. Thus, Azerbaijani administration should stay the course and address the shortcomings of the democratization process. The international community, particularly the OSCE should also continue to support and encourage Azerbaijan in this regard. On our part, we will continue to offer our assistance where needed to ensure that the course remains steady and reforms are rendered irreversible.

Mr. Chairman,

The Nagorno Karabakh conflict not only adversely affects Azerbaijan's social and economic development, but it also hinders peace, stability and cooperation in the Caucasus. Turkey, encouraged by the positive climate in the ongoing negotiation process, as confirmed in the words of Minister Memmedyarov, hopes that an early peaceful solution is found on the basis of the territorial integrity and sovereignty of Azerbaijan and in keeping with the UN Security Council resolutions as well as OSCE norms and principles. I would like to take this opportunity to once again express Turkey's continued support to the Minsk Process as a member of this important Group and to the efforts of its Co-Chairmen.

We wish Minister Memmedyarov and his Government well in their challenging tasks ahead and express the hope that he would find today's deliberations useful enough to encourage him to come back.