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ENGLISH only

**Statement
at the 582nd meeting of the OSCE Permanent Council
December 1, 2005**

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

In response to the statements made by the delegations of the United Kingdom on behalf of the European Union, the United States and Turkey I would like to inform the Permanent Council of the following:

In mid-November representatives of several political parties and organizations and groups applied to the Baky Mayor's Office for an authorization to hold a rally and a mass-meeting. This application had been considered by the Mayor's Office and the authorization to hold a rally and a mass meeting had been given for November 26. The route for the rally and venue for the meeting had also been agreed by the organizers and the Mayor's Office. According to the agreement the opposition parties should have held a 2-hour long peaceful rally and demonstration between 3 and 5 p.m.

On November 25 the Chief of Baky Police Department met with the representatives of those parties and groups to discuss the forthcoming event. He recommended them to refrain from acts, which could lead to confrontation, and end their action within allocated time.

On November 26 the rally started at 3 p.m. as was initially planned. It was proceeding in a calm and peaceful manner, and no tension was observed. However, by the end of the meeting, one of the rally leaders called upon the demonstrators to remain on the square and urged them to continue the meeting as a sit-in. This provocative appeal represented a clear violation of agreement with the city authorities. For this reason, the police forces asked the demonstrators to disperse. Faced with their refusal and aggressive behaviour the police had to intervene in order to prevent the escalation of situation and massive violation of public order.

During the implementation of their duties 46 police officers were injured, 15 of them were hospitalized.

A number of individuals who refused to comply with the police warnings and gravely violated the public order were detained. Part of them was found guilty by the court decisions and was subsequently administratively arrested or fined, while the rest of them were released.

Mr. Chairman,

The Government promotes implementation of large-scale reforms aimed at the dynamic development of our country. It is a clear fact that the majority of the population is committed to legitimate and peaceful political process. However, a number of radical representatives of certain parties and groups try to undermine this important process and achieve its selfish goals by provocations resulted in street riots and clashes.

As we have stated on numerous occasions citizens of Azerbaijan face no obstacles in fulfilling their freedom of assembly. The only condition that has to be met is a full respect for the relevant norms of legislation and rejection of violence. The Government of Azerbaijan will firmly take all measures to preempt any attempts to escalate the situation, to polarize the social atmosphere and to violate the public order and safety.

I thank you.