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du Conseil de l'Union européenne*

Représentation Permanente du Luxembourg
auprès de l'OSCE

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Declaration by the Presidency on behalf of the European Union on the events in Baku

(published in Brussels and Luxembourg on 24 May 2005)

The Presidency regrets the decision taken by the mayor of Baku to cancel the opposition's rally scheduled for 21 May 2005 in the Azerbaijan capital. The presidency is particularly concerned about the arrest of representatives of the opposition.

The European Union wishes to express its grave concern about the restrictions imposed on freedom of assembly. It is launching an appeal to the Azerbaijan authorities requesting them to act in such a way that freedom of assembly is restored in accordance with the presidential decree of 12 May 2005, which ordered the local administration to authorise political rallies and to find the appropriate places for them to be held.

The Presidency wishes to underline the importance of freedom of assembly, as a fundamental political right of each citizen, particularly in view of the forthcoming legislative elections in November 2005.