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United States Mission to the OSCE

Statement in Response to the Pardoning of Political Prisoners in Azerbaijan

As delivered by Ambassador Stephan M. Minikes
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
June 23, 2005

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The United States welcomes President Aliyev's June 20th pardon of 100 prisoners in Azerbaijan. We feel that this was a constructive move by President Aliyev that we hope represents a positive trend. Of particular note is the release of 30 individuals considered to be political prisoners by human rights organizations.

As we stated in the April 7th Permanent Council, on the occasion of the last presidential pardon and release of prisoners, this is good news. However, we remain concerned that the government of Azerbaijan has failed to implement the recommendations on judicial reform of the February report of the OSCE trial monitors. This was noted again last week when the OSCE Head of Office in Baku gave his report to the Permanent Council. We urge the Azerbaijan government to begin implementing those reforms soon.

Thank you.