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**EUROPEAN UNION**

**OSCE Permanent Council Nr 927  
Vienna, 25 October 2012**

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**EU statement in response to the address by the Deputy  
Foreign Minister of Azerbaijan, H.E. Araz Azimov**

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The European Union welcomes the Deputy Foreign Minister of the Republic of Azerbaijan, H.E. Mr Araz Azimov, to the Permanent Council and thanks him for his address.

We would like to use this opportunity to once again thank Azerbaijan for the hospitality extended to OSCE Heads of Mission on the occasion of their recent visit to the region.

We are committed to strengthening the security of the whole OSCE region and believe that it is imperative first and foremost to achieve tangible progress towards the resolution of the protracted conflicts. In this context, the situation in the Southern Caucasus remains of great concern and has direct implications for the security and stability of the whole region. We are convinced that greater military transparency and international access to certain parts of the region could help reduce unnecessary tensions.

We strongly support a peaceful resolution to the long standing Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. We call on Armenia and Azerbaijan to step-up efforts towards finalising the agreement on the Basic Principles, which would allow to begin negotiations on a lasting settlement soon and to progress beyond the *status quo*. In this regard, we support the work of the OSCE Minsk Group co-chairs for the peaceful resolution of the conflict on the

basis of the principles of non-use or threat of force, territorial integrity, equal rights and self-determination of peoples.

We remain concerned about the serious incidents along the Line of Contact and along the border between Armenia and Azerbaijan. We urge the sides to redouble their efforts to avoid such incidents in the future. We reiterate our support to the regular monitoring activities of the Personal Representative of the CiO, Ambassador Andrzej Kasprzyk, and his team, and for efforts to put in place a mechanism to investigate incidents along the front lines, as agreed by the Presidents of Armenia and Azerbaijan at the summit in Sochi in January 2012.

We remain ready to step up our engagement in this area, also in the framework of the activities of the EU Special Representative for the South Caucasus and the Crisis in Georgia, Ambassador Philippe Lefort, and to promote steps that contribute to a peaceful resolution of the conflict, including through confidence-building measures in support of and in full complementarity with the Minsk Group. We call upon the sides to fulfil their commitments undertaken in the framework of the Minsk Group, to show readiness to compromise and engage in dialogue, and to refrain from any rhetoric or action that could heighten tension.

Mr Chairman,

We stress the importance of the full implementation by all OSCE participating States of their obligations and commitments under the OSCE's existing instruments, norms and values. These important commitments constitute significant building blocks in the overall security of the OSCE space.

We would welcome Azerbaijan's further active engagement in issues of the Economic and Environmental dimension, including the fight against

corruption, as well as our joint efforts to build consensus for a Dublin Ministerial decision on the subject of good governance.

We draw special attention to and reiterate the EU's interventions in the Permanent Council during the past months regarding the situation of human rights and fundamental freedoms in Azerbaijan. We call on Azerbaijan to fully honour its respective commitments, especially in the fields of freedom of the media, freedom of assembly and association and the rule of law, including the right to fair trial. In this context, we anticipate that Azerbaijan's hosting of an event for journalists and government officials in Baku on 7 and 8 November 2012 with the active participation of the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media and other actors should be seized as an opportunity to advance respect for freedom of the media in the country. Moreover, we look forward to hearing from Deputy Foreign Minister Azimov about progress in the implementation of the National Human Rights Action Plan, adopted in December 2011.

We reiterate our full support for the activities of the OSCE Office in Baku, which are designed to help Azerbaijan meet its commitments in all three dimensions.

We look forward to developing our relationship with Azerbaijan in the framework of the Eastern Partnership. In the context of the OSCE, we look forward to constructive co-operation in the run-up to and during the Dublin Ministerial Council and the adoption of the 2013 Unified Budget.

Finally, we thank once again Deputy Foreign Minister Azimov for his address.

The Acceding Country Croatia\*, the Candidate Countries the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia\*, Montenegro\*, Iceland+ and Serbia\*, the Country of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidate Bosnia and Herzegovina, and the EFTA country Norway, member of the European Economic Area, align themselves with this statement.

\* Croatia, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.

+ Iceland continues to be a member of the EFTA and of the European Economic Area.