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EU STATEMENT ON AZERBAIJAN

Recalling the Declaration by the Presidency of the European Union of May 24, distributed to Delegations under reference SEC.DEL/131/05, the European Union would like to state its concern about the cancellation of an opposition rally scheduled for 21 May and the subsequent detention of various members of the opposition bloc and affiliated youth and civil society organizations. The EU is particularly concerned about the incidents of violence and of police heavy handedness against opposition supporters and journalists during the attempted rally.

The European Union renews its appeal to the Azerbaijani authorities to restore freedom of assembly as foreseen by the presidential decree of May 12 2005 and looks forward to the undisturbed holding of future political rallies. The EU also notes that the opposition parties themselves have responsibilities to ensure that political rallies and demonstrations take place in a peaceful atmosphere. The EU will continue to closely monitor the situation in the light of coming developments.

The Acceding Countries Bulgaria and Romania and the Candidate Countries Turkey and Croatia¹ align themselves with this statement.

¹Croatia continues to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process