

**EUROPEAN UNION****OSCE Permanent Council Nr 1009
Vienna, 17 July 2014**

**EU Statement in Response to the Report by the OSCE
Project Co-ordinator in Baku, Ambassador Alexis
Chahtahtinsky**

The European Union warmly welcomes Ambassador Chahtahtinsky to the Permanent Council. We thank him for his first report as the new OSCE Project Co-ordinator in Baku following the downgrading of the former OSCE Office in Baku to a Project Co-ordinator's Office. We regret the delay in finalising the Memorandum of Understanding on the Project Co-ordinator's Office and hope that it will soon be signed.

We highly appreciate Ambassador Chahtahtinsky's efforts to develop and implement activities under these new and challenging circumstances. We welcome activities aiming at supporting the host country's efforts in countering human trafficking, increasing accountability in public e-services, preventing domestic violence and promoting tolerance and non-discrimination.

The EU encourages the Project Co-ordinator's Office and the host government to proceed with further project development including in the first dimension. We note with concern that, for the time being, the host government has only endorsed a limited number of projects. We also regret that the OSCE Trial Monitoring Programme in Baku has not been continued following the downgrading of the Office. We urge Azerbaijan to work closely and constructively with the OSCE Project Co-ordinator and to allow the Office to fully implement its mandate covering all three dimensions of security and in particular in enhancing media pluralism. We further reiterate the importance of close engagement with civil society. We are convinced that both the host government and civil society in

Azerbaijan stand to benefit greatly from the support of a viable and properly staffed OSCE presence.

The EU remains deeply concerned about the continued deterioration of the Human Rights situation in Azerbaijan, notably with regard to freedom of expression, freedom of the media and freedom of assembly and association, and we urge Azerbaijan to fully respect its OSCE commitments. We recall our concern with regard to the significant shortcomings during the Presidential election in Azerbaijan last year, and call on Azerbaijan to make full use of ODIHR's recommendations in this regard.

The EU is prepared to further support efforts aimed at implementing OSCE principles and commitments and to contribute to activities, particularly supporting media freedom, justice sector reforms, democratic policing and trial monitoring.

In conclusion, we would once again like to thank the Project Co-ordinator and his staff for their efforts. We wish them every success in implementing the new mandate.

The Candidate Countries the FORMER YUGOSLAV REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA*, MONTENEGRO*, ICELAND+ and SERBIA* and ALBANIA*, and the EFTA country NORWAY, member of the European Economic Area align themselves with this statement.

* The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Albania 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.