



**PERMANENT DELEGATION  
OF NORWAY TO THE OSCE**

**STATEMENT IN RESPONSE TO MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF  
AZERBAIJAN, H.E. ELMAR MAMMADYAROV**

As delivered by Minister Counsellor Erling Skjønberg  
to the Permanent Council, Vienna  
September 6, 2005

Thank you Mr. Chairman,

Norway joins others in warmly welcoming His Excellency Minister Mammadyarov to the Permanent Council. We appreciate his presence here and have listened carefully to his remarks.

Mr. Chairman,

Free and fair elections are in general crucial for democratic development. We trust that the government will take all necessary measures to ensure that the parliamentary elections of 6 November are held in accordance with OSCE commitments. This was also stressed during the visit of our Deputy Foreign Minister Kim Traavik to Azerbaijan last week.

Norway welcomes the decree signed by president Alyyev on 11 May which we see as an expression of the will to overcome the shortcomings of former elections. At the same time we regret that some of the suggestions from the ODIHR and the Council of Europe on amendments to the electoral code have been rejected by the Azerbaijani Parliament.

Full freedom of assembly and expression, and the right for candidates and parties to publicise their ideas without fear of violence or restrictions are key preconditions for free and fair elections. We share the concern expressed by the OSCE and the EU over recent incidents of violent attacks on the opposition, and urge all parties to contribute to a peaceful conducting of election campaigns where political substance is given the main focus.

Mr. Chairman,

Norway is committed to assisting Azerbaijan in its effort for political and economic reform and Euro-Atlantic integration. In this regard we welcome Azerbaijan's decision to increase their co-operation with NATO through the Individual Partnership Action Plan (IPAP). The IPAP document will be a key document for defence and security reform in Azerbaijan. When entering the Partnership for Peace (PfP) all members subscribe to democratic reforms and

human rights as fundamental values for their country and for their membership of PfP. Following up on this commitment in practice will be crucial to the further development of IPAP.

Norway is a firm supporter of the Council of Europe (CoE) and follows with interest the CoE's co-operation with Azerbaijani authorities, representatives of the opposition as well as local NGOs.

Furthermore, Norway welcomes and supports fully the objectives of the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) for Azerbaijan. We hope the negotiations between Azerbaijan and the EU on the ENP action plan will be rapid and successful.

Mr Chairman,

Norway supports the OSCE process and the Minsk group in the efforts of establishing a peaceful solution to the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. We welcome the strengthening of the bilateral dialogue between Armenia and Azerbaijan under the Prague process, and the bilateral talks on the highest level at the CIS summit in Kazan. Norway urges the parties to keep up the momentum and through constructive negotiations find a settlement of the Nagorno-Karabakh issue which would be beneficial to the entire region.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman