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Swedish Presidency of the European Union

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EU Statement on the arrest of two Azerbaijani youth organisation members

The EU has learnt with deep concern about the arrest and the remand into custody of two Azerbaijani youth organisation members, Mr. Emin Milli and Mr. Adnan Hajizade.

We recall various appeals in this respect by the International Community who were asking for fairness and transparency of the legal proceedings. In particular, we would like to emphasize that the issue has also been discussed during the talks held by the EU Ministerial Troika with the authorities of Azerbaijan on 20 July in Baku.

We remind Azerbaijan of its commitments on democracy and good governance, the rule of law, the independence of the judiciary and the respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms made in connection with its OSCE participation and its membership in the Council of Europe, as well as in its relations with the EU, including in the framework of the Eastern Partnership. We recall the EU's concerns regarding the media situation in Azerbaijan as expressed

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in the PC on 9 July and call on Azerbaijan to make full use of suggestions and recommendations of the Representative on the Freedom of the Media.

In the case of Mr. Emin Milli and Mr. Adnan Hajizade, the EU encourages the Azerbaijani authorities to ensure that the next appropriate legal steps are in full compliance with Azerbaijan's international commitments, in particular the right to a fair trial within reasonable time and the right to a transparent and unbiased investigation of the allegations made against the two youth activists. We would be grateful to be informed in due course of the outcome of this issue. In this context the EU recalls its statements in the PC on 9 July on the significant shortcomings of the Azerbaijani judiciary.

In conclusion, the EU reiterates its support for further political and legal reforms in Azerbaijan aimed at convergence on European standards. It is recalled that the EU has welcomed several steps taken by the Azerbaijani authorities over the last few months, notably the amnesty in March 2009 and the progress made with respect to access to persons in custody and in court rooms as well as the adoption of a number of important National Strategies addressing human rights.

The candidate countries CROATIA* and FORMER YUGOSLAV REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA*, the countries of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidate countries ALBANIA, BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA and MONTENEGRO, as well as the European Free Trade Association countries and members of the

European Economic Area ICELAND and NORWAY align themselves with this statement.

*Croatia and Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.