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EU statement on the early presidential elections in Azerbaijan

Early presidential elections took place in the Republic of Azerbaijan on 11 April 2018. President Ilham Aliyev was reelected for his fourth term in office.

As noted in the Statement by the EEAS Spokesperson, it was a constructive step that the Azerbaijani authorities displayed a positive attitude towards international observers, who were mostly able to operate freely.

However, the European Union is deeply concerned that, according to the preliminary findings and conclusions of the International Election Observation Mission, the election took place within a restrictive political environment and under laws that curtail fundamental rights and freedoms, including freedom of assembly, expression and media, which are prerequisites for genuine democratic elections. Against this backdrop and in the absence of pluralism, including in the media, the election lacked genuine competition. On election day, international observers reported widespread disregard for mandatory procedures, a lack of transparency and numerous serious irregularities, such as ballot box stuffing, series of seemingly identical signatures on the voter list, as well as group, proxy and multiple voting.

We were also concerned about the reports that a group of persons attending the OSCE/ODIHR press conference presenting the preliminary findings on 12 April in Baku attempted to disrupt the conference.

The EU expects the Azerbaijani authorities to address the violations and shortcomings identified by the OSCE/ODIHR EOM, as they run against Azerbaijan's OSCE commitments and other international obligations. The EU stands ready to assist in this process. In this context, we would also be interested in learning what plans the government of Azerbaijan has for implementing the OSCE/ODIHR

recommendations, in relation to previous elections, in particular the priority recommendations.

The EU looks forward to continuing dialogue and working closely with Azerbaijan, including with a view to addressing fundamental issues of democracy and human rights, for the benefit of the people of Azerbaijan and EU-Azerbaijan relations.

The Candidate Countries the FORMER YUGOSLAV REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA*, MONTENEGRO* and ALBANIA*, the Country of the Stabilisation and Association Process and Potential Candidate BOSNIA and HERZEGOVINA, and the EFTA countries ICELAND, LIECHTENSTEIN and NORWAY, members of the European Economic Area align themselves with this statement.

* The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro and Albania continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.