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## **STATEMENT BY THE EUROPEAN UNION AT THE 687th MEETING OF THE OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

8 November 2007

### **Declaration by the Presidency on behalf of the European Union on a conviction in Azerbaijan**

I should like to draw the attention of the participating States to a declaration, published on 7 November, by the Presidency on behalf of the European Union on a conviction in Azerbaijan.

“The European Union is greatly concerned to learn of the conviction of Eynulla Fatullayev, founder and editor of the “Realny Azerbaijan” and “Gündelik Azerbaijan” newspapers, and of his sentencing on 30 October to eight and a half years imprisonment by the Court of Grave Crimes of Azerbaijan. The charges against him relate principally to an article which he wrote under the pseudonym of Rovshan Bagirov on 30 March 2007.

“The European Union is convinced that the use made of the criminal code in the case of this article, which is the expression of a personal opinion, is inappropriate and that the sentence handed down is out of all proportion.

“Cases of this kind run counter to Azerbaijan’s commitment to the freedoms of expression and opinion, despite the fact that such matters are essential for implementation of the European Neighbourhood Policy Action Plan concluded in November 2006 and for the development of the partnership between Azerbaijan and the European Union.

“The European Union reiterates that it is important that the Government of Azerbaijan fully respect the rights of a free press and the development of independent media in Azerbaijan and that it guarantee that critical voices will not be silenced.” End of quotation.