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**OSCE Permanent Council Nr 1101
Vienna, 26 May 2016**

EU Statement on the release of Khadija Ismayilova

The decision of the Supreme Court of Azerbaijan to conditionally release Khadija Ismayilova, a prominent investigative journalist, marks a further step in progress towards Azerbaijan's compliance with its international commitments and contributes to the enhancement of relations between the European Union and Azerbaijan. The European Union hopes that this progress will be maintained, through lifting Ms Ismayilova's travel ban, and the release and rehabilitation of all those currently imprisoned or under restriction of movement in Azerbaijan on political grounds.

We welcome the statement of OSCE Chairperson-in-Office H E Walter Steinmeier, as well as the joint statement of the Representative on Freedom of the Media Dunja Mijatovic and ODIHR Director Michael Link, on this issue. We encourage Azerbaijan to make use of RFOM and ODIHR assistance in improving media freedom and journalists' safety, and in protecting human rights and fundamental freedoms.

The Candidate Countries the FORMER YUGOSLAV REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA*, MONTENEGRO*, SERBIA* and ALBANIA*, the Country of the Stabilisation and Association Process and Potential Candidate BOSNIA and HERZEGOVINA, and the EFTA countries ICELAND and NORWAY, members 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.