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STATEMENT BY THE EUROPEAN UNION AT THE 736th MEETING OF THE PERMANENT COUNCIL

23 October 2008

Concerning the presidential elections in Azerbaijan

The European Union would like to draw the attention of the Permanent Council to the declaration by the Presidency on behalf of the European Union of 17 October 2008 concerning the presidential elections in Azerbaijan.

“The European Union is aware of the efforts made to have the elections better organized and of the amendments to the electoral code, reflecting some recommendations by the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) and the Venice Commission.

The European Union nevertheless notes that the elections still do not satisfy international standards, particularly as regards the organization of public debate, the conduct of polling and the counting of votes.

The European Union urges the Azerbaijani authorities to continue their efforts to honour their international commitments regarding democratic pluralism and media freedom. It reaffirms its willingness to continue its support for the development of democratic institutions in Azerbaijan, under the European Neighbourhood Policy.”

The candidate countries Croatia and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia*; the countries of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidate countries Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro and Serbia; the European Free Trade Association countries and members of the European Economic Area Iceland and Norway align themselves with this statement.

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