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## **United States Mission to the OSCE**

### **Response to Pardon of Five Azerbaijani Journalists**

As delivered by Ambassador Julie Finley  
to the Permanent Council, Vienna  
January 17, 2008

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The United States welcomes the news that President Aliyev of Azerbaijan recently pardoned five journalists as part of a larger, year-end general amnesty. These five were among several jailed by the Government for having expressed their political opinions in the public media.

We look forward to further steps by the Government of Azerbaijan to improve the media environment. Free expression and free media are the cornerstones of democracy, and they are also among the fundamental commitments of OSCE participating States. The United States hopes the Government of Azerbaijan will continue along the path of encouraging the development of a modern, professional, and independent media, as befits a democracy.

The United States believes Azerbaijan will be well-served in this process by working in partnership with national media representatives and civil society, as well as with the international community and, in particular, the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.