

Austrian Presidency of the Council of the European Union**Permanent Council No. 610****18 May 2006****EU Statement on Azerbaijan**

1. The European Union thanks the OSCE / ODIHR Limited Election Observation Mission for its work on the partial repeat parliamentary elections which took place in Azerbaijan on 13 May.
2. The European Union welcomes, based upon published information by ODIHR that the repeat elections reflected some improvements, including in candidate registration, the campaign environment and conditions for domestic observers and publications of results. However, problems with the composition of election commissions and complaints and appeals processes, as well as interference by local authorities in the election process remain a continuing concern. .
3. In this context, the European Union looks forward to publication by the OSCE / ODIHR of detailed findings and conclusions on the repeat elections. Recalling that OSCE / ODIHR concluded that the November 2005 parliamentary elections did not meet a number of OSCE commitments, the EU urges the Azerbaijani authorities, at all levels, to accelerate the necessary electoral reforms in co-operation with the OSCE/ODIHR and the Office in Baku and to take all steps to ensure that the next elections will be held in full compliance with OSCE commitments.
4. The EU also calls upon all political forces of Azerbaijan to contribute to the political and institutional reform process.

The Acceding Countries Bulgaria and Romania, the Candidate Countries Turkey, Croatia* and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia*, the Countries of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidates Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia and Montenegro, EFTA country Norway, a member of the European Economic Area, align themselves with this declaration.

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