STATEMENT

by the Spokespersons of EU High Representative Catherine Ashton and Commissioner Štefan Füle on Presidential elections in Azerbaijan

The spokespersons of Catherine Ashton, High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and Vice President of the Commission and Commissioner Štefan Füle, issued the following statement today:

"The High Representative and the Commissioner take note of the preliminary findings and conclusions of the OSCE/ODIHR International Election Observation Mission to the Azerbaijan Presidential Election of 9 October 2013.

The strong turnout in the election demonstrates the commitment of the people of Azerbaijan to the democratic process. Nevertheless, the OSCE/ODIHR's preliminary conclusions state that significant problems were observed throughout all stages of election day processes, and identify serious shortcomings - including limitations on the freedoms of expression, assembly and association that did not guarantee a level playing field for candidates - which need to be addressed in order for Azerbaijan to fully meet its international commitments. Equally, citizens who have filed election appeals need to be provided sufficient guarantees of effective redress.

The High Representative and the Commissioner, noting the statement of the European Parliament and the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe's delegations, welcome the will of the Azerbaijani authorities to have a large presence of national and international observers. They further encourage the Azerbaijan authorities to consider the recommendations of the international community, with a view to continuing to develop the path towards democracy and the rule of law in Azerbaijan.

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The High Representative and the Commissioner look forward to continuing our close cooperation with Azerbaijan as we pursue together our important bilateral agenda under the Eastern Partnership and the European Neighbourhood Policy."