EU – Azerbaijan Cooperation Council
Twelfth meeting, Brussels, 25 November 2011

The Cooperation Council between the European Union and the Republic of Azerbaijan held its twelfth meeting on Friday 25 November 2011. The EU was represented by Mr Mikolaj Dowgielewicz, State Secretary for European Affairs of Poland, acting on behalf of the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Catherine Ashton, and Mr Štefan Füle, Commissioner for Enlargement and European Neighbourhood Policy. The Azerbaijani delegation was led by Mr Elmar Mammadyarov, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Azerbaijan, acting as chair of the Cooperation Council meeting.

This meeting took place following the recent visit of HRVP Ashton in Baku on 15-16 November which confirmed the EU’s commitment to reinforcing links with the region. The Cooperation Council reviewed progress on the settlement of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. The EU reaffirmed that the status quo is unacceptable and that the solution of this conflict remains a top priority. Both sides reiterated their support to efforts deployed by the OSCE Minsk Group. The EU confirmed its determination to strengthen its support to and co-operation with the Minsk Group, notably through further confidence building measures. The EU expressed concern at the increasing number of incidents at the line of contact and called on all sides to reduce tension and abstain from strong rhetoric.

The Cooperation Council underlined the need to remain focussed on and speed up the implementation of the European neighbourhood policy action plan. The Cooperation Council provided a good opportunity to take stock of latest developments in the South Caucasus, as well as to review recent political and economic reforms in Azerbaijan.
The EU recalled the importance of continuing progress on the matters of democracy, rule of law and human rights. In view of the deepening bilateral relations between the EU and Azerbaijan in the framework of the Eastern Partnership, the EU encouraged Azerbaijan to step up reforms in these fields. The EU expressed concern at the situation of human rights and fundamental freedoms in Azerbaijan and underlined that these elements are essential components in the bilateral relationship and in the framework of the Eastern Partnership. The EU reaffirmed its readiness to continue its support for the further development of democratic institutions in Azerbaijan.

The two sides expressed satisfaction with the on-going negotiations on the Association Agreement, while underlining the need to accelerate their pace. The EU confirmed that negotiations on agreements on visa facilitation and on readmission could start at the beginning of next year. Both sides confirmed that the first meeting of the new subcommittee on social affairs and education will take place in the first months of 2012.

The Cooperation Council discussed EU-Azerbaijan cooperation in the energy sector and welcomed the launch of negotiations between Turkmenistan, Azerbaijan and the EU on 12 October on the construction of the Trans Caspian Pipeline. The two sides welcomed the recent signature of a gas transit and purchase agreement between Azerbaijan and Turkey and confirmed the importance of the Southern Corridor and its contribution in reaching the common objective of energy security and the security of energy transportation from the Caspian Sea to the EU.