



Brussels, 12 February 2014  
140212/01

## S T A T E M E N T

**by the spokespersons of EU High Representative Catherine Ashton  
and Commissioner Štefan Füle on the enactment of amendments  
to the legislation on non-governmental organisations 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 Štefan Füle, European Commissioner for Enlargement and Neighbourhood Policy, issued the following statement today:

*"The High Representative and the Commissioner are concerned by recent amendments to NGO legislation in Azerbaijan restricting the environment for an independent and critical civil society, especially in the field of human rights and democracy.*

*In view of Azerbaijan's upcoming chairmanship of the Council of Europe's Committee of Ministers, the High Representative and the Commissioner call upon the Azerbaijani authorities to abide by their international commitments and to review the law on NGOs with a view to addressing the concerns formulated by the Venice Commission. In particular, they call upon the authorities in Azerbaijan to improve and facilitate the registration procedures for international NGOs, creating an environment conducive for all NGOs to carry out their legitimate activities.*

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*The High Representative and the Commissioner acknowledge the recent efforts by the Azerbaijani Government to engage civil society on its proposals to amend NGO legislation. While they recognise that this process led to some changes in the final legislation as adopted, they remain concerned by the overall impact of this legislation on civil society."*

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