

Iham Aliyev, President, Republic of Azerbaijan

Ogtay Asadov, Speaker, National Assembly, Republic of Azerbaijan

Donald Tusk, President, European Council

Jean-Claude Juncker, President, European Commission

Federica Mogherini, Vice-President of the European Commission, High Representative of the EU for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy

Johannes Hahn, European Commissioner for Neighbourhood Policy and Enlargement Negotiations

Martin Schulz, President, European Parliament

Ministers of Foreign Affairs, EU Member States

Michel Forst, UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders

Pedro Agramunt, President, Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe

Thorbjørn Jagland, Secretary General, Council of Europe

Nils Muižnieks, Commissioner for Human Rights, Council of Europe

Ilkka Kanerva, President, OSCE Parliamentary Assembly

Michael Georg Link, Director, OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR)

Lamberto Zannier, Secretary General, Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE)

18 March 2016

Statement

by the Steering Committee of the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum on Release of Several Political Prisoners in Azerbaijan

The Steering Committee of the Civil Society Forum welcomes the release of several political prisoners, including our colleague Anar Mammadli, in Azerbaijan on the occasion of the Novruz holiday. This gesture marks a first step towards the establishment of a relationship of trust between the government and civil society at large in Azerbaijan.

This relationship is essential if Azerbaijan's stability is to be assured and mutually beneficial relations between Azerbaijan and the EU are to be developed. This can only happen with the full release and rehabilitation of all those currently imprisoned or under restriction of movement in Azerbaijan on political grounds in line with the country's international commitments.

In addition we appeal for the lifting of restrictions on the activities of civil society organisations, thus enabling them to fully contribute to Azerbaijan's future wellbeing.

Members of the Steering Committee of the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum