



**COUNCIL OF  
THE EUROPEAN UNION**



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**EU- Azerbaijan Cooperation council, 8th meeting  
Luxembourg, 16 October 2007  
Press release**

The Cooperation Council between the European Union (EU) and the Republic of Azerbaijan held its eighth meeting on Tuesday 16 October 2007. The meeting was chaired by Mr Makhmud Mammad-Quliyev, Deputy Foreign Minister of Azerbaijan. The EU delegation was led by Mr Manuel Lobo Antunes, Secretary of State for European Affairs of Portugal. Mr Gunnar Wiegand, acting Director for Eastern Europe, Southern Caucasus and the Central Asian Republics, represented the Commission. The EU Special Representative for the South Caucasus, Ambassador Peter Semneby also took part in the meeting.

The Cooperation Council was the first meeting at this level between the EU and Azerbaijan since the EU-Azerbaijan European Neighbourhood Policy Action Plan was adopted on 14 November 2006.

**P R E S S**

During the meeting, the parties discussed a wide range of issues. One of the main topics was the European Neighbourhood Policy, particularly the implementation of the ENP Action Plan. The Cooperation Council also provided a timely opportunity to take stock of developments in the South Caucasus, as well as political and economic reforms in Azerbaijan. The Cooperation Council also discussed energy and transport issues.

The EU underlined the importance of the protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms, as well as further steps to strengthen democracy and media freedom in the country as essential elements in the bilateral dialogue. The EU stressed that it is very important that the next Presidential elections in Azerbaijan in the Autumn 2008 are held in full compliance with the commitments taken by the country with the EU, OSCE/ODIHR and Council of Europe and should correspond to international standards for democratic elections.

On the occasion of the Cooperation Council, the two Parties also signed the "Protocol to the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement between the European Communities and their Member States, of the one part, and the Republic of Azerbaijan, of the other part, extending the provisions of the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement to bilateral trade in textiles, taking account of the expiry of the bilateral textiles agreement".

The plenary meeting of the Cooperation Council was preceded by a joint ministerial working breakfast between the EU and Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia to discuss matters of common interest, such as conflicts and regional cooperation in the South Caucasus. Mr Manuel Lobo Antunes, Secretary of State for European Affairs of Portugal represented the EU Presidency. He was accompanied by Ms Helga Schmid, Director of Policy Unit, and Ms Benita Ferrero-Waldner, Commissioner for External Relations and European Neighbourhood Policy.