Baku, 10 October 2013



Election observation delegations of PACE and the EP were invited by the Azeri authorities to observe Presidential election held on 9 October 2013. As the Heads of delegation, we would

first of all like to congratulate the people of Azerbaijan on their peaceful campaign and Election Day.

- We did not come to Azerbaijan to give lessons or to measure the rate of democratic development in the country but rather to witness and encourage the transition process towards democracy that the country is experiencing.
- Overall around Election Day we have observed a free, fair and transparent electoral process.
- The will of the authorities of Azerbaijan to have a large presence of national and international observers for the 2013 presidential election is commendable.
- From what we have seen, electoral procedures on the eve and on Election Day have been carried out in a professional and peaceful way. We were pleased to see the sound technical preparations and the investment made by the Azeri authorities for this election.

- On Election Day we did not witness any evidence of intimidation against voters, in or close to polling stations. There was no presence of police around polling stations in compliance with the electoral law. We have not seen any signs of campaign material close to polling stations
- However, improvements are still desirable with regards to the electoral framework, notably concerning the respect of fundamental freedoms during the months before the election.

- We encourage the authorities to carefully consider previous and current recommendations from the international community.
- We also appreciated a more open electoral debate, compared to past elections, although freedom of expression remains a serious concern.
- We also believe that the opposition has had – although reduced – a window of opportunity for this election which must be developed for the future.
- This electoral process can be seen as a start. Far from being perfect, but a start. We encourage the Azeri authorities to seriously continue to develop the path towards democratization of the country.
- Azerbaijan has been a member of the Council of Europe for more than 10 years and the 2013 presidential elections were held at a crucial moment for relations between the EU and Azerbaijan, that is less than two months before the Eastern Partnership Summit in Vilnius.

- Final reports on the observation of the elections will be delivered in the forthcoming weeks by the two institutions.
- The European Parliament stands ready to keep working closely with the Parliament of Azerbaijan to enhance EU – Azerbaijan relations, both bilaterally and in the context of the Eastern Partnership.
- Azerbaijan remain under the monitoring procedure of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, and the Assembly will continue to work with the Azeri authorities towards their full compliance with the commitments Azerbaijan subscribed to upon joining the Council of Europe.