



United States Mission to the OSCE

Statement on Presidential Pardon in Azerbaijan

As delivered by Political Counselor Bruce Connuck
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
September 9, 2004

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

On September 3, the president of Azerbaijan, Ilham Aliyev issued a decree pardoning 264 individuals, including 15 individuals considered to be political prisoners by local human rights activists. Among those pardoned and released was former separatist leader Alikram Humbatov.

The United States welcomes President Aliyev's pardon decree and his recent calls for national reconciliation.

There are still some important legal cases to be resolved, including those of seven opposition leaders currently on trial for organizing last year's post-election violence. As OSCE participating States members, we all share a commitment to due process and an independent judiciary and we look forward to the conclusion of these cases consistent with these principles as quickly as possible.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.