

**Ilham 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)

25 May 2016

### **Steering Committee Statement on the Release of Khadija Ismayilova**

The Steering Committee of the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum welcomes the long-awaited release of the investigative journalist Khadija Ismayilova from prison.

Ms Ismayilova was unjustly persecuted and imprisoned for her journalistic work and served 1.5 years of a 7.5-year prison sentence. Since her sentence has only been reduced to a suspended 3.5-year term, we call on the authorities to drop all charges against the journalist.

The Steering Committee expects that in accordance with the country's formal obligations as a member of the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and Council of Europe, the authorities in Azerbaijan will respect Ismayilova's right to continue her professional activities, and her travel ban will be lifted.

Finally, we await the release and rehabilitation of the remaining political prisoners in Azerbaijan. The government must recognise that this is the only way towards achieving long-term stability in the country.

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