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PRESS RELEASE

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Tomorrow's Sochi summit to push for observers?

Tomorrow, 5 March 2011, Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev and Armenian President Serzh Sargsyan will meet in Sochi at the invitation of Russian President Dmitry Medvedev for a tripartite meeting on the settlement of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. The latest meeting in that format was held in Astrakhan on 27 October 2010. European Friends of Armenia (www.eufoa.org) strongly welcomes this initiative and reminds that the entire international community must now realise their interests in the region, all of which will be in jeopardy without peace.

"The international community, especially the OSCE Minsk Group, must now make a clear push for at least removing snipers and installing observers on the line of contact – a first step of confidence building. Armenia has clearly stated that it accepts the Madrid principles as an integrated whole. Azerbaijan has said that it 'has only few problems' with them, but continued its war threats heavily. In this light, we remain very sceptic that they could agree on anything, unless there is a united international push", said EuFoA Secretary General Michael Kambeck.

On 11 February 2011, the Azerbaijani Minister of Defence told the three OSCE Minsk-Group Co-Chairing Ambassadors publicly that "Azerbaijan is seriously preparing for the de-occupation of its lands" (<http://www.today.az/news/politics/80770.html>). This was repeated on 2 March during a meeting with his Slovenian counterpart. That was another proof of the recent International Crisis Group (ICG) warning on the "increasing likelihood of an accidental war at any time or an all out offensive, probably by Azerbaijan, within the next few years". According to the report it "also could be signs of preparation to use force before the country's [Azerbaijan's] oil revenues are projected to decline after 2014" and attempt to "play nationalist card... to distract attention from the social problems".

These war threats are unfortunately just recent examples of many war threats made by Azeri officials, including the President and Minister of Defence. For a complete collection, please visit our website at <http://www.eufoa.org/uploads/AZWarThreats.pdf>.

EuFoA is happy to provide commenting or background analysis in English, German, French, Italian, Polish, Russian and Armenian. Members of the Europe-Armenia Advisory Council may also be available for comments; for enquiries please contact our secretariat.

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