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**Statement by the Delegation of the Republic of Azerbaijan
1144th Meeting of the Permanent Council,
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on the World Press Freedom Day

Mr. Chairperson,

The Delegation of the Republic of Azerbaijan joins previous speakers in marking the World Press Freedom Day. We are of the view that discussions on this matter in the OSCE should be guided by our shared commitments on media freedom based on comprehensive security concept, which lies at the heart of the Organization. It is in the interest of the OSCE to encourage positive contribution of media to promotion of dialogue and understanding.

Against this background, it is of deep regret that the issue of freedom of the media is consistently abused as a political tool to exert pressure on other participating States. In too many instances the notion of the freedom of the media is used as a pretext rather than genuine driving force for Delegations within the OSCE, especially by the Delegations of the United States of America, the European Union and some European countries. Individual cases and countries are being singled out due to political preferences. We strongly reject such a detrimental approach.

We would like to take this opportunity to once again highlight that media-related commitments in the OSCE, in parallel with the freedom of the media, also imply responsibility of journalists to report impartially, objectively and professionally. The OSCE has yet to strengthen its focus for developing ethical journalism, including in the context of armed conflicts.

Despite our persistent calls, it remains to be source of serious concern that sometimes journalists, mainly from the EU member states and USA, while pursuing the interest to obtain first hand information from conflict zone, intentionally violate national legislation and border-crossing procedures of visiting state. Such a disrespectful approach causes legal and criminal liability for journalists, as well as put their safety and security into serious risk. It also causes tensions among the participating States.

In light of above-mentioned, we would like to reiterate our call for elaboration and adoption of principles governing journalistic activity, especially in conflict zones. We recall taskings of the Brussels and Madrid Ministerial Councils on adoption of voluntary professional standards by journalists, media self-regulation and other appropriate mechanisms for ensuring increased professionalism, accuracy and adherence to ethical standards among journalists and renew our call on the participating States and the Office of the Representative on the Freedom of the Media to closely look into the matter.

Thank you, Mr. Chairperson.