



**Statement by the Delegation of the Republic of Azerbaijan
1146th Meeting of the Permanent Council,
18 May 2017**

in response to the Delegation of the European Union and aligned States

Mr. Chairperson,

I would like to exercise the right of reply to the statement of the European Union and aligned States.

The Delegation of the Republic of Azerbaijan expresses serious concern over misusing the issue of freedom of expression for exerting political pressure on OSCE participating State, taking a selective approach and applying double standards.

As a rule, the Delegation of Azerbaijan does not comment on decisions of courts in our country. We encourage the Delegations who spoke and aligned to refrain from actions or statements, which are considered as interference with legal process.

We reject all allegations on non-compliance by Azerbaijan with its international commitments. Two weeks ago in PC, we have demonstrated our position in the statement on the occasion of World Press Freedom Day. Azerbaijan calls on those Delegations who spoke and aligned on this agenda item to look into their own practices in the area of freedom of expression and restrictions imposed on the media and internet on the grounds of national security or public order.

For instance, in France, the state of emergency legislation empowers the interior minister to take any measures to interrupt online public communications services inciting or glorifying terrorist acts. The legislation also granted powers to the interior minister to immediately interrupt online communication services deemed to “incite or glorify terrorist acts.” The United Nations human rights experts raised concerns about “excessive and disproportionate restrictions on fundamental freedoms” in France, including “the lack of clarity and precision of several provisions of the state of emergency and surveillance laws.” In 2015 alone, five websites were blocked with no judicial or public oversight under suspicion of containing terrorism-related information.

Tight controls and restrictions were placed on the media’s coverage of refugee and migrant stories. Several photographers and reporters were taken into police custody while doing reports about migrants in the Calais region and along the border with Italy.

This is by no means an exhaustive list of measures taken by the EU Member States to the online and offline media. Yet, none of them has been brought to the Permanent Council. Therefore, we found the current issue initiated by the Delegation of the EU as yet another manifestation of selective approach, which we strongly denounce. We urge the EU and aligned States to cease such practice, since it does not contribute to restoration of trust and dialogue within the OSCE.

Thank you, Mr. Chairperson.