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## **Statement by the Delegation of the Republic of Azerbaijan**

### **Conference on “Media freedom in volatile environments”, *Session 3A: Accreditation and access to information in conflict areas***

*19 June 2017*

Mr. Moderator,

The Delegation of the Republic of Azerbaijan thanks distinguished panelists for their insightful presentations.

Accreditation and access to information in conflict areas is indeed an important issue and we thank the organizers for including this topic into the agenda of the conference. We see this session as an opportunity to raise awareness within the journalistic community on existing international legal frameworks and national practices. We hope that today’s discussions will be instrumental for improving compliance by journalists with existing rules and procedures.

Any activity, including journalistic activity, with regard to conflicts and conflict areas cannot be seen separately from delicate issues of state security and national defense. It is therefore, important to underline that accreditation and access to information in conflict areas cannot be considered as “a mere administrative procedure”. It should be dealt with carefully in accordance with existing international standards, OSCE commitments, and national legislation and regulations so that ensuring freedom of the media and legitimate interests of the State and public go hand in hand, and do not undermine each other.

In this context, UN Security Council resolution 2222 (2015) is of particular importance, as it provides useful framework for the journalistic activity and serves as the terms of reference for the media professionals working in and reporting on the situations of armed conflicts. It affirms the commitment to the principles of the political independence, sovereign equality and territorial integrity of all States, and calls for respecting for the sovereignty of all States. It condemns use of media to incite violence, genocide, crimes against humanity and other serious violations of international humanitarian law. Therefore, it is the responsibility of all involved stakeholders, including journalists, media professionals and associated personnel not to propagate or promote in any manner the results of such heinous violations of international law and international humanitarian law.

As a country directly affected by conflict, Azerbaijan has elaborated set of norms and regulations at the national level, which stem from established international practice and serve to ensure freedom of the media in a challenging security environment we found ourselves due to existence of the conflict. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Azerbaijan has adopted “*Rules of accreditation of the representatives of foreign mass media in the Republic of Azerbaijan*”, which is

available online on the web-site of the Ministry. It outlines the procedure and rules for obtaining accreditation for journalistic activity in the country.

The provisions related to respect for the territorial integrity and sovereignty of the Republic of Azerbaijan are of particular importance in the context of activities of journalists. The rules establish that illegal visit by a representative of foreign mass-media to the occupied territories of Azerbaijan without prior permission of the relevant authorities of Azerbaijan and/or any activity against territorial integrity, independence, interest and sovereignty of the Republic of Azerbaijan is a ground for rejection of accreditation or its termination.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs has issued a travel warning regarding visits to the occupied territories of Azerbaijan, which is attached to this statement. We reiterate our call on the OSCE participating States, as well as journalistic organizations to distribute this travel warning as wide as possible, including among the journalists, and take all necessary measures to prevent illegal visits.

It should be underlined that the journalists who disregard the warning by the Azerbaijani authorities and thus, deliberately violate the above-mentioned rules are included into the list of persons whose entry into the country is denied. The Government reserves the right to take appropriate legal actions in response to legal and criminal liability caused by violation of national legislation and regulations.

We believe that the RFoM Office has an important role to better inform the journalists, media professionals and associated personnel about the existing international and national practices regarding journalistic activity on conflicts. This would be a significant deterrent against any restriction on media-related activities that could stem from lack of proper understanding about existing national rules and regulations. We encourage the RFoM Office to invest more in awareness raising and promotion of professionalism within the journalistic community, especially in the context of conflict reporting.

Thank you, Mr. Moderator.



**Republic of Azerbaijan  
Ministry of Foreign Affairs**

**Warning for the foreign nationals wishing to travel to  
the occupied territories of the Republic of Azerbaijan**

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Azerbaijan would like to remind all nationals of foreign countries wishing to travel to Nagorno-Karabakh and other occupied regions of Azerbaijan that due to continuing occupation by the Armed Forces of the Republic of Armenia, these areas are temporarily out of control of the Republic of Azerbaijan.

Any visit without the consent of the Republic of Azerbaijan to the above-mentioned territories, which are internationally recognized as an integral part of Azerbaijan is considered as a violation of sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Republic of Azerbaijan and as a breach of national legislation, as well as relevant norms and principles of international law.

Accordingly, the Ministry calls all foreign nationals to refrain themselves from travelling to the occupied territories in and around the Nagorno-Karabakh region of the Republic of Azerbaijan.

The Ministry would like to remind that those who traveled to the occupied territories without prior permission of the Republic of Azerbaijan will be denied the entry to the Republic of Azerbaijan. In case of necessity, appropriate legal actions will be taken with regard to these persons.

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