



Statement by the Delegation of the Republic of Azerbaijan

*at the Conference on Journalists' safety, media freedom and pluralism in times of
armed conflict
June 15-16, 2015*

Opening remarks

Mr. Chairperson,

The Delegation of the Republic of Azerbaijan welcomes Mrs. Dunja Mijatovic, OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media and Mr. Ivan Simonovic, Assistant Secretary-General for Human Rights and thanks them for their opening remarks.

We also wish to thank Mr. Roy Gutman for his keynote speech that outlined main features of the issue to be extensively discussed throughout this event.

The issue of protection of journalists in armed conflict is a very pertinent topic, which in our view requires further elaboration and discussion. This is, in particular relevant to the countries that are affected by conflicts and legitimate authorities that cannot exercise effective control over the conflict affected territories.

It is with deep regret we note numerous cases of death and injuries suffered by journalists during the crisis in and around Ukraine. Nevertheless, we have to note that this unfortunate phenomenon is far from being new and known to us too well. During an active phase of the Armenian ongoing aggression against Azerbaijan around 13 journalists fell victim of Armenian armed forces, 9 of whom died. 4 of the journalists killed during the war have been granted the status of the National Hero and were buried in the Martyrs' Lane.

Azerbaijan recognizes and highly values the commitment and dedication of these journalists who paid a high price for shedding light to the tragic events of the early 90th.

OSCE as an organization that covers three main dimensions of the security in its activity is uniquely placed to deal with the issue of the protection of journalists in the times of armed conflicts. Comprehensive approach applied by the OSCE, as well as the experience and knowledge that OSCE possesses on the specific features of the conflicts existing in the OSCE area, along with the substantive commitments in the area of human dimension constitutes a solid basis to build balanced and focused discussions on the ways how to facilitate and address the violation of basic rights of civilians, including journalists during the armed conflicts. Thus OSCE has a potential and every opportunity to be in the forefront of the international organizations that deals with the issue of protection of journalists in conflicts.

Upon this backdrop OSCE participating States agreed back in 1991 in Moscow “*to adopt, where appropriate, all feasible measures to protect journalists, engaged in dangerous professional missions, particularly in cases of armed conflicts and cooperated to that end.*” Nevertheless, this issue was left without proper attention, as the agenda of the relevant structure of the OSCE was overloaded with out-of-mandate topics.

Now day’s reality shows that media constitutes an important element that serves as an instrument to shape or influence mind of people on various topics, including different ongoing conflicts. Journalists covering armed conflicts not only deliver information on current state of the affairs, but also prepare ground for future researches and historical analyses. The sensitive nature of the conflicts and tensions between conflict affected parties requires the highest level of professionalism of the journalists covering conflicts. These journalists should abide by the norms and the principles of international law and national legislation of respective countries with full respect to the territorial integrity and sovereignty, as enshrined in the UN Security Council Resolution 2222. They should refrain from promoting separatism, illegal regimes and secession of the territory. Journalists should act for resolution of the conflict and reintegration of the territories; they should strive for restoration of a dialogue between conflict affected communities.

In this vein we welcome the decision to hold discussion on the issue of the protection of journalists in armed conflicts and look forward for fruitful exchange of views.

Thank you, Mr. Chairperson.