



Statement by the Delegation of the Republic of Azerbaijan

1060th Meeting of the Permanent Council,

18 June 2015

in response to the RFoM

Mr. Chairperson,

The Delegation of the Republic of Azerbaijan welcomes Mrs. Dunja Mijatovic, the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media to the Permanent Council meeting.

We have taken note of the report presented by the Office of the RFoM and in this regard would like to provide our remarks related to the activities of the Representative on Freedom of the Media.

At the outset, I have to stress that our Delegation on numerous occasions, including at the Permanent Council meetings, provided exhaustive information on concrete cases mentioned in the report of Mrs. Mijatovic. I wish to disagree with the previous statements claiming that the Office led by Mrs. Mijatovic has a perfect record in its assessments and conducted activities. In our view there is still room for improvement for the work of the Office and especially in terms of activities realized in line with the mandate entrusted to this Institution. In particular, we wish to raise an attempts made by the Office of Mrs. Mijatovic related to the foreign funded human rights defenders, NGOs and political activists operating in Azerbaijan. It is known that the mandate limits the field of activities of the RFoM only to observance of media developments in the OSCE participating States, assistance in the implementation of relevant OSCE commitments and protection of journalist in the times of conflicts. Despite of the fact that this issue has been brought to the attention of the RFoM several times, we have not received clear and sound explanations on the reasons for deviation from the mandate.

The second point we wish to make is the assessment of the situation with freedom of expression and free media in Azerbaijan, herewith I reiterate the need to apply a comprehensive approach without favoring only particular sources of information that you might have in your Office. While mandate permits to collect and receive information on the situation on the ground from organizations or institutions, as well as national and international media associations, it sets explicit stipulation that these sources ought to be of a *bona fide* nature. Unfortunately, the recent public statements and interventions made by RFoM leave space for doubts that those sources are of truthful nature.

There are close to 5.000 independent media resources acting in Azerbaijan. Therefore, those few who are arrested or detained for committing concrete crimes cannot be used for general assessment of the situation. Every person bears responsibility before the law for his or her deeds and being a journalist does not grant immunity or discharge from liability. Therefore, our Delegation rejects all allegations against Azerbaijan raised by European Union and aligned countries, as well as the Delegation of the United States of America.

The exercise of the right to freedom of expression cannot be absolute; it cannot prejudice the freedoms of other members of society. It has to respect public moral and societal values. This would promote tolerance and non-discrimination in the society. In this regard we reiterate our call on RFoM to work with journalist and media representative to increase the level of professionalism, accuracy and adherence to ethical standards.

I thank you, Mr. Chairperson.