



Statement by the Delegation of the Republic of Azerbaijan

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

ethics of journalism in conflict reporting

Mr. Moderator,

The adherence of journalists to the principles of ethics cannot and should not be disregarded, as the honorable purpose of every journalist is to ensure the free exchange of information that is accurate, fair and thorough. Journalists take a responsibility for the accuracy of their work, and herewith, ethics and high moral values serve as tools for this system of checks and balances.

Most international organizations, as well as journalistic unions have adopted concrete principles that constitute the basis for an ethical behavior of professional journalists. Despite the tasking adopted by the Ministerial Council of the OSCE calling for the 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 very little has been done in the OSCE to that end. We hope that the Office of the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media will stir up its efforts in this direction to comply with the relevant OSCE decisions.

The media has a strong influence in promoting moral values and tolerance, countering or exacerbating misperceptions and prejudices. Moreover, the media can play an essential role while covering the conflicts and has a potential to be an 'instrument' of conflict resolution when the information it presents is truthful and impartial. This essentially increases the importance of ethical journalism.

In situations of tension and conflict the media have a moral obligation not to cause an additional harm and to defend respect for human dignity, solving problems by peaceful, tolerant means, and consequently to oppose violence and the language of hatred and confrontation. To that end the media can play a major role in preventing tension and must encourage mutual understanding, tolerance and trust between the various communities in regions where conflict prevails.

While acting in times of conflict and reporting on the situation on the ground journalist should provide context and take special care with a view not to misrepresent a story. Journalist should refrain from presenting one-sided narrative of the situation, any action that

could promote separatism and unlawful secession of territories or propagate illegally established structures, as well as distortion of toponyms. Therefore, every piece of information should be verified before releasing, so that the final work can be accurate and fair.

Sometimes journalists while pursuing the first hand information from the scene of the conflict disregard basic principles of the international law and national legislation of the respective country. This is especially true to the visits to the occupied territories that are out of the control of the legitimate authorities.

First of all this might cause legal and criminal liability for the visitors and put their safety and security into serious risk. As visits to such territories without prior consent of the legitimate authorities can result in legal proceedings, including in the form of administrative or criminal prosecution for that journalist.

On the other hand, this expose personal safety and security of those journalist to serious risk, as territories that fall out legitimate control represent a zone of ongoing hostilities, with possible terrorist and related organized criminal activity. Therefore, any such visit should be previously agreed with relevant authorities of the state, to which these territories are belong under international law.

In conclusion, we once again reiterate the importance of ethical journalism, especially in times of conflicts.

Thank you, Mr. Moderator.