



Statement of the Delegation of the Republic of Azerbaijan at the Permanent Council Meeting 1035

in response to the statement of the EU on Freedom of Expression in the OSCE Area

Our Delegation took note of the statement delivered by the distinguished Delegation of EU and the Delegation of Montenegro, Iceland, Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Norway aligned to this statement. Its content will be communicated to our respective authorities in Baku and Mission to Brussels.

The EU representative touched upon many issues and a number of countries, including Azerbaijan. As usually, the distinguished EU representative has overlooked the situation with media freedom in the EU member states. Therefore, our Delegation considers this EU statement as another demonstration of biased and selective approach that is not contributing to building trust and confidence among the OSCE participating States. The moment the EU Delegation would be ready to openly discuss in the Permanent Council the situation with freedom of expression comprehensively, impartially and objectively, in particular violations of this freedom in the EU member states, and take adequate steps to rectify or improve the situation, our Delegation may engage in constructive dialogue. Until that moment, we accept neither accusations nor the tone of the distinguished EU Representative statement.

Nevertheless, there is one element in the statement of distinguished EU representative that our side considers incorrect. That is an attempt to elevate the freedom of expression to an absolute level. Recent history of and current developments in the OSCE region and beyond prove that such an approach is contradictory and detrimental to peace and stability, mutual respect, religious harmony and public moral.

All 57 OSCE participating States and many partners for cooperation strongly condemn manifestations of terrorism in all forms. In the meantime, we are all different and have diverse societies with a complex set of values and traditions. Rejecting this diversity and encouraging further insult of feelings of hundreds of millions of OSCE citizens cannot be recognized as a wise and comprehensive approach to address the root causes of terrorism. Nor would such an approach help building confidence towards EU and its member states from the countries with predominant Muslim population. Such an approach would also jeopardize the

attempts to strengthen tolerance and non-discrimination within multicultural EU states.

Our Delegation strongly encourages the EU Delegation and its member States to explore the opportunities for protecting the freedom of expression not at the expense of grievances of offended, but with a view to promoting respect for public values and moral in a multicultural societies. We hope that the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media will also consider such a balanced and healthy approach.

Thank you.