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## PRESS RELEASE

### **Disturbing trend of unfounded allegations by the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media undermines credibility to this institution**

Vienna, 11 November 2014 - In response to the press release distributed by the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media (RFoM) on November 10<sup>th</sup>, 2014 the Permanent Mission of the Republic of Azerbaijan to the OSCE expresses its concerns over senseless and unfounded accusations disseminated against the Azerbaijani authorities. The press-release content is yet another demonstration of biased and inadequate assessments prevailing in the OSCE Representative with regard to freedom of the media in Azerbaijan.

Claim that *“practically all independent media representative and media NGOs have been prosecuted”* is far from reality. Nowadays there are 5.000 media outlets; 40 daily and more than 200 weekly and monthly newspapers; 9 country wide, 1 satellite, 14 regional and 14 cable TV channels; more than 50 information agencies and 4005 NGOs functioning in Azerbaijan. Out of the thousands only about a dozen of media and NGOs representatives are detained or fall under travel restrictions due to ongoing investigations on charges of tax evasion, hooliganism and drugs.

Apparently, the extent of independence of media NGOs and journalists in Azerbaijan is determined in the Office of RFoM by the reliance on and acceptance of foreign sources of financing. Otherwise, many locally funded and financed media and NGO representatives in Azerbaijan guided by the objectiveness and impartiality criteria would have been among the RFoM partners.

The alarming trend is that favorite foreign funded “independent media and advocates for freedom of the media” in Azerbaijan have recently become the predominant partners of Ms. Mijatovic. Such a narrow-minded approach, which is unfortunate, but still prevalent in some OSCE institutions, impairs the ability of the RFoM to properly understand the processes taking place in and around Azerbaijan and leaves no room for cooperation with the authorities in Baku.

The Azerbaijani side, which have hosted and kindly sponsored many events organized by Office of the RFoM, including the South Caucasus Media Conferences, remains interested in objective and impartial functioning of the OSCE RFoM and will spear no efforts to improve its performance as well as overall effectiveness of the OSCE.