



STATEMENT BY THE DELEGATION OF THE REPUBLIC OF AZERBAIJAN

The OSCE Supplementary Human Dimension Meeting Working Session I: Freedom of expression and freedom of the media with a special focus on conflict situations, including protection of journalists and reporting during armed conflict 27-28 October, 2016

Thank you Mr. Moderator,

The Delegation of the Republic of Azerbaijan welcome the decision of the German Chairmanship to devote the second Supplementary Human Dimension Meeting to the topic of freedom of expression and freedom of the media with a special focus on conflict situations, including protection of journalists and reporting during armed conflicts. Nevertheless, we would like to see such aspects as rights and responsibilities of journalists, as well as adherence by the journalists to the international norms and principles and national legislation also covered in today's discussion.

We also would like to join previous speakers in thanking ODIHR for the preparation of this SHDM, as well as guest speaker and all others for their interesting presentations.

Freedom of expression and free media are essential elements in enhancing security and stability through promoting dialogue, mutual respect and culture of co-existence. This role becomes even more vital in situations of conflicts and crises, when media might be exploited to foment hatred and ethnic tensions.

OSCE has a unique role to provide a platform for open discussions on the issue of protection of journalists in times of armed conflicts, as well as coverage and objective reporting on the basis of its comprehensive security concept. OSCE has an appropriate mandate and experience to address these issues due to its knowledge of specific characteristics of the conflicts existing in the OSCE area and substantive commitments in the area of human dimension. We believe that OSCE is well placed for addressing current challenges to free media and freedom of expression, in particular in the context of armed conflicts.

The sensitive nature of the conflicts requires the highest level of professionalism and ethics of journalists. Media might be instrumental in peaceful resolution of conflicts and restoration of a dialogue between conflict-affected communities, provided that media representatives are objective, impartial and professional. We believe that journalists should provide context of the specific conflict and take special care with a view not to misrepresent a story. Moreover, it is of utmost importance to not sacrifice reliability to immediacy, since unverified information can further exacerbate tensions. Journalism should not be politicized and turned into a propaganda tool for promoting separatist groups and other unlawful armed formations and their agendas.

The participating States undertook commitments to take all feasible measures to protect journalists engaged in dangerous professional missions, in particular armed conflicts. States have an obligation to faithfully observe the generally accepted norms and principles of international law by taking measures that would prevent their nationals, including journalists, operating on their territories, to engage in activities that violate these norms, in particular those related to respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of other States.

Freedom of media does not give immunity from responsibility over violation over international law and the national legislation of the country they visit.

Journalists, media outlets and other stakeholders should also take decisive measures so that their facilities and networks are not used for the purposes incompatible with the fundamental aims of objective, impartial reporting and not to propagate in their activities terrorism, violent extremism, and separatism.

In this context, our Delegation would like to see more active engagement of the Office of the Representative on Freedom of the Media in the area of increasing the level of professionalism of journalists and consider adoption of the OSCE Guidelines on fair journalist reporting of the conflict situations.

Thank you Mr. Moderator.