



**Statement by the Delegation of the Republic of Azerbaijan
1099th Meeting of the Permanent Council,
05 May 2016**

On world press freedom day

Mr. Chairperson,

The Delegation of the Republic of Azerbaijan joins previous speakers in marking the World Press Freedom Day. We are of the view that discussions of this matter in the OSCE should be guided by our shared commitments on media freedom based on comprehensive security concept, which lies at the heart of the Organization.

Media-related commitments in the OSCE, in parallel with the freedom of the media, also imply responsibility of journalists to report impartially, objectively and professionally. The OSCE has yet to strengthen its focus for developing ethical journalism, including in the context of armed conflicts.

In situations of tensions and conflicts media have a moral obligation to refrain from causing additional damage. Truly free and independent media would try to be part of solution rather than a part of a problem. It is in the interest of the OSCE to encourage positive contribution of media to the peaceful settlement of disputes or conflicts. While it is important to present comprehensive picture and the views of all sides, media can be instrumental in advancing tolerance and mutual understanding of conflict-affected communities.

Against this background, it is of concern that sometimes journalists, mainly from the EU member states and USA, while pursuing the interest to obtain first hand information from conflict zone, intentionally violate national legislation and border-crossing procedures of visiting state, despite repeated calls of concerned authorities.

Such a disrespectful approach might cause legal and criminal liability for journalists, as well as put their safety and security into serious risk. Therefore, any such visit should be previously in advance agreed with legitimate authorities of state concerned.

In light of above-mentioned, we would like to reiterate our call for elaboration and adoption of principles governing journalistic activity, especially in conflict zones. Many international and non-governmental organizations, as well as journalistic unions have adopted ethical standards of behavior of professional journalists. Despite the tasking of Brussels and Madrid Ministerial Councils on 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.

It is within this context that we call the Office of the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media to speed up its efforts on elaboration of professional standards for journalists in light of relevant OSCE decisions. We further encourage the RFoM to closely work with the participating States, especially the EU member-states and USA, in promoting necessary measures that would dissuade journalists from illegally visiting territories of the OSCE participating States.

Thank you, Mr. Chairperson.