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Activity of Azerbaijani Ombudsman in the field of Human Rights

Mr. Moderator
Ladies and Gentlemen,

One of the most important steps of reforms made in different directions towards the integration process of Azerbaijan Republic into the European legal system was creation of Ombudsman Institution that is an effective human rights protection mechanism.

Ombudsman Institution is considered as an important mechanism on human rights protection in legal system of over hundred world countries and strengthening legality and activity of state bodies.

The main purpose of creating such democratic institution is to achieve restoration of human rights and freedoms enshrined in the Constitution of the Republic of Azerbaijan and in the international treaties to which Azerbaijan is a party and violated by governmental and municipal bodies and officials of the Republic of Azerbaijan. Taking into account the competences and activity principles of all ombudspersons in the world, Azerbaijani Ombudsman Office stimulates development of the legal consciousness, opinion and culture.

The Commissioner's activities are regulated under the Constitutional Law which has tremendous place in the field of human rights protection and promotion in Azerbaijan.

Ombudsman closely cooperates with state bodies, municipalities, NGOs, civil society and mass media. In order to make this cooperation more effective, Council of Independent Experts was set up at the Ombudsman in 2003. Members of civil society organizations are represented at this Council. The Council is dealing with analysis of human rights situation in the country, making proposals for improving legislation, conducting monitoring and evaluation.

In order to coordinate the work on protection of human rights and freedoms of different categories of population, by the Order of Ombudsman specialized advisors were appointed on refugees and IDPs, elderly people, persons with disabilities, children, national minorities, military servants, prisoners, women's rights and gender equality, fighting against torture, corruption, human trafficking and freedom of religion and conscience and others. Specialized advisors regularly analyze national legislation and international legal acts on different issues, situation in the country, prepare recommendations on different directions.

Annual reports of the Commissioner provide activity on protection of human rights and freedoms, including civil and political rights – right to liberty and privacy, right to protection of honour and dignity, freedom of expression, freedom of speech and information, freedom of assembly and conscience, right to vote, right to appeal, right to association, right to fair trial, right to legal assistance, as well as economic, social and cultural rights – labour rights, right to work in safe and healthy conditions, right to social security, right to live in healthy environment, right to health protection, right to education, right to housing, right to free entrepreneurship and other rights and freedoms enshrined in national legislation and international legal acts on human rights to which the Republic of Azerbaijan is a party.

As a country successfully passed the transition period, today turned to the country determining its own long-term development strategy directions and human rights are one of those directions. Namely, taking into account these factors and as a logical continuation of the reforms made, for increasing effectiveness of protection of human rights and freedoms, developing legal culture, providing sustainability of measures for improvement of legislative framework as well as legal protection system, the country President approved the National Action Program on to raise Effectiveness of Protection and Promotion of Human Rights and Freedoms in the Republic of Azerbaijan of by his Decree dated 27 December 2011.

The Program provides goals on holding of complex measures of various directions through development of the concept of state human rights protection, their enforcement, coordination, and monitoring and evaluation mechanism. Furthermore, the Program provides further development of human rights and freedoms protection system, improving the national legislative framework and taking specific measures for effective promotion of the rights of various groups of population in the country.

During the past period, specific measures for implementation of the provisions of the NAP were held by the corresponding public stakeholders and close cooperation with the civil society.

From the perspective that 18 June is celebrated as a Human Rights Day in Azerbaijan, as every year, this year the period between 18 May-18 June was declared “month long human rights campaign” by the Ombudsman and in the frame of these months range of human rights events were conducted with public stakeholders and civil society institutions.

The Ombudsman office took part in several international programs, including the Twining and TAIEX projects run by EU and the Eastern Partnership. The Ombudsman operates either as a national human rights institution (NHRI), as an NPM, UPR evaluation, monitoring and coordination functions, also as and an independent monitoring mechanism for the CRPD.

The Azerbaijani Ombudsman office also successfully participates in implementation of the NAPlan for 2012-2015 years on “Promotion of the Open Government” approved by the Presidential Decree of 5 September 2012 as well as the NAPlan on “Fight against Corruption for 2012-2015”.

The abovementioned national action plans were adopted with purpose of sustainability of measures taken towards human rights protection, improvement of the relevant legislative and institutional framework, compliance of the activities of state and self employment authorities with open government principles, extension the participation of the civil society in decision making processes and increasing the transparency, and fulfillment of international obligations undertaken by Azerbaijan.

I would like to note that the working Group on “Business and Human Rights” was established at the Ombudsman of Azerbaijan, corresponding state bodies and civil society organizations were involved into its work. Such documents as documents on business and human rights adopted at the UN level, UN Global Agreement, Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights affirmed by the UN Human Rights Council, Edinburgh Declaration determining the direction of activities of national human rights institutions was analyzed, the ways of practical implementation of Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights were discussed.

The Azerbaijani Commissioner also met with the UN Working Group (WG) on Business and Human Rights headed by Mr. Puvan Selvanathan and during the meeting, the WG members were given comprehensive feedback about the Ombudsman’s activities in the field of business and human rights.

Currently, Azerbaijan forwards to a new stage of development. The main goal of this step is to further effective promotion of human rights, bringing welfare of the population into compliance with decent and international standards, also getting new achievements in development of science, culture and all areas of public life.

New created situation of the world set new obligations. From the perspective of carrying out these new obligations and for determining the goals of the perspective development of the country until 2020 and their implementation, the country President approved the Order on Development Concept “Azerbaijan 2020: Look onto Future” dated 29 December 2012.

The chief aim of the Concept is to achieve the development stage characterized by sustainable economic development and high social welfare, good governance and rule of law, full promotion of human rights and freedoms and active participation of the civil society in public life of the country.

The goals of the Development Concept “Azerbaijan 2020: Look onto Future” shows once again that holding large scale measures covering all fields will further promote efficient promotion of human rights, increasing the social-economic situation of the citizens, in general.

The Azerbaijani Ombudsman office as a NHRI accredited with A status by the UN OHCHR continues the activities for further ensuring the human rights, improvement the governance, and targeted to stability as well as development using all its potential.

Thanks for your attention!