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**STATEMENT BY THE DELEGATION OF THE REPUBLIC OF AZERBAIJAN**

**Supplementary Human Dimension Meeting  
Rule of Law in Promotion and Protection of Human Rights  
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Thank you Mr. Chairperson,

Government of Azerbaijan continues to implement series of measures aimed at improving mechanisms of human rights protection and strengthening of democratization in Azerbaijan. Ensuring the respect of the rule of law, increasing the capacity of democratic institutions, promotion of the civil society and development of the freedom of expression and media is of paramount importance in this regard.

The Commissioner for Human Rights of the Republic of Azerbaijan is one of the central institutions in promoting and protecting human rights. Direct contact with concerned people and receiving individual and collective complaints provides an opportunity to immediately conduct investigation, and take urgent measures addressing the appropriate state bodies for solution of the raised problems. The recommendations submitted by the Commissioner cover areas of enhancement of national legislation on human rights in compliance with the international commitments.

The State Committee for Family, Women and Children Affairs, Department on Fight against Trafficking in Human beings at the Ministry of Internal Affairs; Department against Corruption at the General Prosecutor's Office are closely working with the Commissioner for Human Rights to achieving one common aim.

In 2011 President approved "*The National Program for Action (NPA) to Raise Effectiveness of the Protection of Human Rights and Freedoms in the Republic of Azerbaijan*". The main purpose of the NPA is to increase the effectiveness of the protection of human rights and freedoms, develop a culture of law and ensure the sustainability of the activities aimed at improving the normative-legal framework and the human rights protection system. NPA identifies major directions of the Government's activity for the

coming years and in fact provides the public and international community with the full picture of priorities of Azerbaijan in the field of protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms.

Recent launch of State Agency for Services to Citizens and Social Innovations (“ASAN service” centers) proved to be an effective mechanism in improving the quality of services provided by government agencies and facilitation the transition process to electronic services.

The measures to fight the impunity of perpetrators of violence and to bring so called “culture” of punishment even of high rank officers in all branches of governance, in law-enforcement state organs – police, prosecutor, courts, executive power and other offices are being strengthened. In this regard transparency at all levels of governance, fighting against corruption, serving the best interests of people, hearing and prompt resolving of complaints of citizens that would serve for improvement of good governance, rule of law, prevention of violation of human rights is high on agenda.

Free media, freedom of expression, association and assembly are among integral elements of every democratic state. And even if no state has perfect records in implementation of its international commitments, achievements in this area should not be diminished. The Constitution of the Republic of Azerbaijan guarantees freedom of expression, freedom of association and freedom of assembly. National legislation as well as relevant international human rights treaties envisages the possibility of restriction to the right of peaceful assembly and freedom of expression and freedom of assembly in conformity with the law and which is necessary in the interest of national security or public safety, public order, the protection of public health or morals or the protection of the rights and freedoms of others. Decriminalization of Defamation could become yet another step towards more free media. There is a wide range of opinions on this particular subject, and discussions within different layers of our society are now continuing. But the most important factor in this regard, is the commitment of the Government and it is there. It worth mentioning that not a single journalists has not been criminally charged for defamation in Azerbaijan since 2009. A reasonable compromise applicable to Azerbaijan is something that should be found. The Draft law on defamation is elaborated, among others, with the assistance of the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media and the OSCE Office in Baku and has been presented to the Venice Commission of the Council of Europe and now is under consideration.

One of the serious problems that Azerbaijan has to face is the problem of displaced persons and refugees. The problem of refugees and IDPs has much wider scope. Millions of people

in the OSCE participating States have been forcibly expelled from their homes or fled ethnic violence and hostilities. Refugees and displaced persons already for many years have been deprived of the elementary living conditions and exercise of the most fundamental human rights, enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, including the right to live in dignity in their homes and on their native land.

While some matters related to human rights get the most attention, in certain cases suffering of millions of IDPs and refugees as a result of grave human rights violations remain practically unnoticed by the OSCE and subsequently are not reflected in the work agenda of the Organization.

Our Delegation hopes that in future this matter will find proper place among human dimensions events.

Thank you Mr. Chairperson,