

## **WS 6**

**As delivered by Gulsel Safarova**

### **Fundamental freedoms including freedom of expression, peaceful assembly and association.**

Azerbaijani state has created every condition for freedom of assembly and association. It is an integral part of the Azerbaijan's democratic state-building. For Republic of Azerbaijan freedom of peaceful assembly and association is one of the democratic achievements. Azerbaijani government is determined to implement further commitments concerning development of democracy.

There are about 3,500 NGOs in Azerbaijan, which make significant contributions to the development of all spheres of society through their initiatives and practical steps. Therefore, statements and allegations of limitations of the activities of civil society institutions cause nothing but regret.

Favorable conditions were created for political parties to act freely in Azerbaijan. The law sets very simple requirements for state registration of parties. Currently, there are 55 registered parties in Azerbaijan. More than 40 political parties are in opposition to the incumbent government. Eleven parties, including seven opposition parties, are represented in the Azerbaijani parliament.

International organizations confirm that law on peaceful assembly appropriates to modern European standards. In 2008 after amendments on the law coordinated with Council of Europe Venice Commission, the Commission highly appreciated and called positive changes. OSCE Baku office declared that in the preparation of the law there were taken into account proposals of OSCE and term of peaceful assembly.

During the rallies there were not any obstacles. The Baku Executive Power authorized more than 5 rallies of the National Council of Democratic Forces last and this year. Azerbaijani state has always created and will create conditions for holding such rallies at the places not disturbing the work of urban transport, movement of residents of the city and harmony of dynamic city life. Our point of view is that opposition has to hold rallies according to the law. The government has to create appropriate opportunity to provide peaceful assembly and association, freedom of expression.

I would like to tell in short about amendments on legislation concerning NGO-s in Azerbaijan. The accepted laws are in the frame of commitment that Azerbaijan made under international organization. Azerbaijan was based on experience of leading countries in some changes in legislation. I would like to mention that there was held discussion with experts working on human rights, democracy and other fields, chairs of organizations, representatives from Parliament and Ministry of Justice concerning on changes in NGO legislation in Azerbaijan.

In general changes on NGO legislation provides NGOs to be transparent and responsible towards their work. For example, NGO-s hold neither annual meeting, nor report activity. Law demands to do it open and transparent. Amendments on legislation addressed to increase quantity the mechanisms.

Therefore, amendments on NGO legislation serve to enhance transparent activity of NGO-s, social control, accountability, increasing of responsibility and efficiency.