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Freedom of expression, free media and information in Azerbaijan

Democracy plays a special role in the development of any country. A country may be economically rich and have natural resources, but if there isn't a good atmosphere in society and no freedoms, then this development will be half-hearted or unstable. Our advantage lies in the fact that we carry out political and economic reforms in parallel. Freedom of speech is fully guaranteed in Azerbaijan. There are no restrictions. Azerbaijan is a country where internet is completely free. According to the latest information about 80 percent of the population of Azerbaijan uses the Internet. Under such circumstances, there can be no problems with the freedom of speech and expression. However, some nongovernmental organizations sometimes criticize and even accuse us. These accusations are unfounded. This is just a biased position. The reason is clear. Looking at the real situation, we can all see that freedom of speech and all other freedoms are fully provided in Azerbaijan.

Today there operates more than 40 daily, more than 200 weekly and monthly newspapers in Azerbaijan. 10 national, 1 satellite, 13 regional and 17 cable TV-broadcasts. The population of the country is about 10 million and the number of people using social media in Azerbaijan is 2 million. This figure demonstrates that the development of free media in Azerbaijan was very successful.

Years of independence have opened new prospects for the development of free media and information as well as freedom of expression. Starting from 1993 artificial barriers that limit the freedom of speech and information were abolished, the legislative base of Mass Media has been improved and adapted to international standards. On November 12, 1995, the Constitution adopted by the nation-wide referendum included freedom of speech, opinion and information, everyone's right to receive and disseminate information, and the inadmissibility of censorship on the media. In 1995 the Constitution adopted by the nation-wide referendum

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With the purpose of improvement of Mass Media material and technical basis newspaper editorial offices were exempted from value added taxes in 1998. It ought to be remarked that amount of annual discounts for Mass Media much more exceeds the taxes amount which they paid.

Certainly, Mass Media organizations are considered main actors raising awareness of people. Azerbaijan takes one of the leading stands among CIS countries and Eastern Europe according to quantity of Mass Media. About 5000 Mass Media organizations registered in Azerbaijan. Nowadays only submission of documents to the Ministry of Justice is required for publications of newspaper, magazines, foundations and news agency. After the following 7 days it is possible to start printing publications. One might say that at present in Azerbaijan we have one of the most liberal and democratic laws regarding to Mass Media. But Azerbaijan went forward and in 2009 there was created Mass Media State Support Fund in order to strengthen civil society, especially media organizations.

Today, hundreds of media outlets operate in the country quite freely and in safety conditions, journalists carry out their professional duties without any obstacles. Responsibility in democracy is very important case nowadays. Each journalist like each citizen of Azerbaijan should take into consideration accountability, transparency and responsibility for himself. Crime doesn't recognize a profession. For this reason, we see unacceptable the attempts of some foreign circles to distort reality in Azerbaijan, unreasonably combining individual situations, to harm the country's democratic image, and we call on them to refrain from such an approach. Generally, within the process of investigation or decision to require exemption them by some international organization or delegations it can be valued as pressure on law-enforcement bodies of Azerbaijan.

It is clear that all these statements fabricated from a center. Each delegate should be responsible for the statement. If the delegation or organization thinks that one can slander as much as they want, they think wrong There are a number of problems in the OSCE member states regarding current topic. It should be noted that during the reporting period problems recorded in Western countries in ensuring freedom of expression included attacks, threats against and murder of journalists, violence toward journalists covering public events, defamation laws and legislative amendments incompatible with freedom of expression, including libel cases and etc.

Thanks for your attention!