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**Measures carried out in the direction of more efficient protection of
media freedom and access to information in Azerbaijan**

Mr. Moderator
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Media freedom is a human right of crucial importance, in particular to the reason that, it plays a significant role in the establishment of democracy and the realization of all other human rights.

The complex measures have been undertaken by the relevant state bodies on realization of promotion measures on the more effective provision of the right to access information, media freedom and the explanation of the legislation of the Republic of Azerbaijan on access to information as considered in the “National Program for Action to Raise Effectiveness of the Protection of Human Rights and Freedoms in the Republic of Azerbaijan” and close cooperation was built with civil society organizations and media organizations in this direction.

The conferences, seminars and trainings were conducted jointly with state bodies for the purpose of discussing the relevant provision of the National Program for Action and discussing their more efficiently implementation; representatives of media organizations were involved in these trainings, lectures were delivered at secondary education schools and higher educational facilities.

Use of information and communication technologies in state structures and in realization of public services, application of innovative solutions is one of the priorities of the state policy and significant measures have been taken in Azerbaijan for sustainable development. Establishing an internet network throughout the country, promoting an open-government caused to increase in the Internet users’ number, publicity and transparency of information assuming social importance have been provided.

These are essential the formation of state information resources and systems, management and mutual integration in the implementation of a single approach and standards, also to accelerate the transition process to the digital government in order to provide transparent, operational and resource-saving services for the purpose of full electrification of public services to provide citizens with transparent, operational and resource-saving services, analysis of the state information resources and creating the opportunities for public and private sector usage capacities.

From this respect, the Decree of the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan “On Measures to Develop Electronic Government and Transition to the Digital Government” was signed on March 14, 2018, in order to improve the management system in this field and the efficiency of the realized work.

Traditionally, as every year, according to the Ombudsman’s initiative, On December 10 – the International Human Rights Day, journalistic writings on “Rights for All” and children drawings on “Me and my Rights” competitions were organized, as well as awareness-raising events were held in the capital and regions.

At the initiative of the Ombudsman, a roundtable was launched with the participation of relevant state bodies, international organizations and experts, local NGOs with the purpose of discussing the tasks set forth in the National Action Plan adopted to further facilitate access to information.

At the same time, the regional centers of the Ombudsman also conducted series of awareness-raising activities related to explanation of the Law of the Republic of Azerbaijan “On Access to information” in the regions.

A group of staff members of the Ombudsman’s Office exchanged experiences in Germany for the aim to support of the Ombudsman’s capacity building for the implementation of the Law “On Access to Information” within the Twinning project implemented with the participation of partners from Germany and Poland. Within the frames of the visit the activities of relevant institutions in the field of data protection, the freedom of information, received applications, work carried out in this direction, positive work experience were discussed during the meetings held in the Office of the Federal Commissioner of Germany for Data Protection and Freedom of Information, the Berlin and Saxony Offices of this institution.

Within the framework of the Twinning project a training workshop on the topic “Increasing awareness for the promotion of the right to access information” was held in the Office of Ombudsman with the participation of representatives of other governmental bodies, including the press service staff members.

The Ombudsman Office jointly with the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights has organized traditional practical workshops on human rights for media representatives.

From February-July 2018, within the framework of “Gender Equality and Media Freedom Project in Azerbaijan” the trainings were held in different regions of our country jointly by the Ombudsman Office, the Press Council and the Council of Europe.

The trainings were attended by representatives of non-governmental organizations and mass media, views were exchanged on the experience of Azerbaijan and the Council of Europe in the field of gender equality and media freedom, highlighting the issues of journalism ethics, social media and gender equality.

Thank you for attention!