

**OSCE Review Conference
(Warsaw, 30 September-8 October 2010)**

ENGLISH only

Right of reply by the Delegation of the Republic of Azerbaijan

Working session 2 – Freedom of religion and belief

Madame Moderator,

I wish to begin from general remarks followed by replies to the raised issues. As a country where long-standing traditions of tolerance and peaceful coexistence of different religions and ethnic groups over centuries became an inseparable part of the culture, Azerbaijan has repeatedly demonstrated its determination to act as a natural bridge bringing together different countries, religions and civilizations through promotion of inter-religious dialogue based on mutual respect and understanding among peoples of different religions. Over the past years Azerbaijan hosted a number of international events involving UN, OSCE, Council of Europe, Organisation of Islamic Conference, world religious leaders, etc.

In Azerbaijan different religions enjoy all rights and their respective issues are addressed by authorities concerned. Among them the State Committee on work with religious structures has been implementing dynamic activities, namely in the field of registration of religious entities, and by now hundreds of such entities have been registered.

As for the remark by the US delegation I wish to say that no mosque has been closed and there are no so-called limitations for religious activities.

Regarding the remark by the representative of Jehovah's Witnesses let me remind that the issue of alternative service is under consideration by the relevant parliamentary commission. However, I would like to underline also that Azerbaijan is in a state of war and this creates objective limitations.

To conclude, I wish to reiterate our outstanding commitment to respect further the religious diversity in Azerbaijan.