



Hügelgasse 2, A-1130 Vienna Tel: +43 (1) 403 13 22 Fax: +43 (1) 403 13 23 E-mail: vienna@mission.mfa.gov.az

STATEMENT BY THE DELEGATION OF THE REPUBLIC OF AZERBAIJAN

**984th meeting of the OSCE Permanent Council
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in response to EU and US statements on amendments to the law on NGOs

Thank you Mr. Chairperson,

In response to the statement delivered by the Delegation of European Union and United States I would like to provide our comments.

In response to the statement delivered by EU Delegation I would like to provide excerpts from the statement issued by the spokesperson of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Azerbaijan in response to the statement by the spokespersons of EU High Representative Catherine Ashton and Commissioner Stefan Füle on February 12, 2014.

“We found the statement by EU senior officials on the amendments to the legislation on non-governmental organizations in the Republic of Azerbaijan surprising and confusing.

Drafting of legislation was conducted in cooperation with the Venice Commission of the Council of Europe. These amendments to the law were subject for extensive discussions with representatives of NGOs, parliamentarians, Ministry of Justice and other international organizations. Relevant proposals of civil society representatives were duly taken into account.”

Overall assessment of the amendments, which are in line with the Constitution of the Republic of Azerbaijan, European Convention on Human Rights and OSCE commitments, is that they will contribute to the strengthening of transparent activities of civil society, development of NGOs and adequately reflect the priorities and security requirements of the country.

Policy of the Government of Azerbaijan is aimed at developing vibrant civil society and active participation of its representatives in all spheres of public life in accordance with national legislation. To this end, the Government of Azerbaijan also recently adopted the law on “*Public participation*” and approved a five-year action plan targeted to strengthen civil society institutions.

Therefore, the Delegation of Azerbaijan finds the EU statement, delivered without due consideration of the measures undertaken to promote transparent activities of NGOs and civil society institutions in Azerbaijan as not corresponding to reality.

With regard to the statement made by the Delegation of United States, I have partly responded to the issues related to the NGO legislation. As far as it concerns the cases of civil activists Anar Mammadly we have provided extensive comments and clarifications at 978th meeting of OSCE Permanent Council on December 19, 2013. This statement was distributed for all Delegations and we would refer the US Delegation to this statement.

On the issue of Yadigar Sadigov, our Delegation provided the comments at the 982nd meeting of OSCE Permanent Council on January 31, 2014 and I would refer the US Delegation also to this statement.

In general, the Azerbaijani authorities have established all necessary legal basis for free and open functioning of a civil society, fair administration of justice and transparent judicial processes. We are working with the OSCE and other international organizations to advance democratic transformations both in Azerbaijan and beyond our region, to consolidate independent and prosperous Azerbaijani nation and to contribute to strengthening of peace and security in the entire South Caucasus region.

As far as the activities of the OSCE field presence in Azerbaijan are concerned our Delegation would like to stress that they will be realized in accordance with the mandate approved by all 57 participating States and based on the needs and priorities of the Government of Azerbaijan.

Thank you Mr. Chairperson.