



Statement

Under the Current Issue on the Sentencing of the Journalist Afgan Mukhtarli in Azerbaijan

**as delivered by the Permanent Delegation of Armenia at the 1172nd Meeting of the OSCE Permanent Council
January 18, 2018**

Mr. Chairperson,

My delegation did not intend to make a statement under this current issue not because we did not share legitimate concerns of a large number of participating states on deterioration of human rights in Azerbaijan but with a wish to let Azerbaijan to make thorough self-assessment on the current situation without any references to the NK conflict.

However, since Azerbaijan consistently links its failures to uphold OSCE commitments particularly on freedom of expression and fair trial to the NK conflict and invites us to be a part of this discussion in the Organization, we would like simply to state three points.

First, we strongly deplore abduction and extradition of journalists and other media workers by Azerbaijan from the different OSCE participating states with the aim to punish and imprison them.

Second, we deplore the use of the NK conflict for suppressing human rights or justifying their violation.

Third, we recognize that the lack of the respect of fundamental freedoms in Azerbaijan including freedom of expression is one of impediments for the resolution of the NK conflict, since any meaningful conflict resolution requires preparation of societies to peace through genuine debate and thus freedom of expression, which is not currently case in Azerbaijan.

Thank you.