

**Statement by the Delegation of the Republic of Azerbaijan**

ENGLISH only

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Working session 1 – Democratic institutions

Mr Chairman, Ladies and Gentleman,

Thank you very much for the opportunity to speak before you today.

First, I would like to express my particular gratitude to Kazakhstan as the Chair-in-Office of the OSCE for its efforts in mobilizing the OSCE community on human dimension and to Poland for its traditional hospitality.

We are aware that free and transparent elections are important feature of modern democracy as they ensure the election of political leadership based on the will of people. At the end of day we have many people celebrating victory from one side and, from other, disappointed by results. Often people become disappointed because their expectations may have been too unrealistic and too ambitious. This is to say that in the OSCE area we have been witnessing different nature of challenges and problems for electoral process, both in those with longer and in those with shorter democratic experience alike.

Azerbaijan believes that the key to progressing on electoral matters lies through securing dynamic, uneasy and long-term process of changes with involvement of various segments of society. What genuine elections also require is a culture of democracy and of dialogue. From other point, it is evident that elections require capacity for people because people must be capable of making conscious choices. That is why by avoiding politicized approach it is of utmost importance to build capacity for participation through training sessions and target-oriented programs for citizens about elections. Another priority area is establishing awareness-raising and educational programmes for the youth and fostering gender equality to increase involvement and responsibilities in political life, networks and organizations.

Given this for Azerbaijan elections present an important tool of democratization and political modernization of the country. Free and fair elections are at the top of the agenda of the Government and their holding in transparent manner will let first of all citizens to subscribe more to values of pluralism. Over the past years

elections have allowed us to fix notable progress and at the same time to break stereotypes and to address effectively outdated practices and approaches such as family voting and interference in electoral process. Nevertheless, we do not remain satisfied as every democracy needs constant improvement to tackle the most important issues. And in this process the close cooperation with the international and regional organizations, namely OSCE, Council of Europe, GUAM, CIS and other related structures has been providing plenty of examples of concrete results. The same spirit has been upheld at the eve of forthcoming parliamentary elections due to be held on 7<sup>th</sup> November 2010.

The Azerbaijani authorities regard it to be utmost important to further improve the conditions for its people to be able to express their will freely and effectively. As of today, with a view of implementation of national legislation and the commitments taken before the OSCE, the Azerbaijani authorities have done enormous work in the following areas: voters' list have been updated, Constituency election commissions activity have been monitored, their logistical capacities have been strengthened, complaints and appeals procedures have been tackled, numerous trainings and awareness-raising measures have been organized for election commissions members and other relevant officials involving more than 30,000 people, transparency and accountability has been increased through active mass media coverage, invitation of numerous local and international observers and applying new information technologies. Among challenges we face is that due to the fact of foreign occupation people from several constituencies are dispersed throughout the country and such situation mobilizes authorities concerned to organize proper conditions for internally displaced persons. This very fact has been mentioned in the last ODIHR's Needs Assessment Mission report.

The above mentioned developments do not exhaust the list of broad and comprehensive arrangements with regard to the parliamentary elections.

We are confident that these elections will further consolidate democratic participation of citizens in political life of the country and mark a new stage in democracy-building in Azerbaijan.

Thank you.