

Statement by the Delegation of Azerbaijan Republic

ENGLISH only

Working session 1 – Freedom of the Media

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Ensuring the rights and freedoms, including those related to the freedom of speech and media, rights of access, use and dissemination of information is among the main goals of Azerbaijan Republic. A lot has been done to bring the legislation of Azerbaijan Republic in line with international and European standards and in that regard we have successfully cooperated with different international organizations. Hereby, we would like express our gratitude to OSCE/ODIHR and the Venice Commission (*the European Commission for Democracy through Law*).

Along with significant progress, we have also been facing a further need to address such issues as financial independence of mass media outlets, the weak condition of their material-technical basis, the non-professionalism of journalists etc. The public debate over the “defamation law” of the last years has shown that before accepting the defamation law those problems should be addressed. Therefore relevant measures have been undertaken:

- Aiming to increase the professionalism of journalists Academy of Journalism was established with the support of the Embassy of the United States of America in Azerbaijan Republic and the OSCE Baku office and it has been functioning for several years now;
- Media Council was established in 2003 by the media and journalist organizations. Being mainly responsible for the self-regulation of the media, its main responsibilities also include the regulation of the relationships among state bodies and the media. Based on the appeals received from citizens the Council makes warnings and recommendations to editorships of media outlets. According to public opinion the Council’s work has contributed a lot to the increase of the professionalism of journalists;
- “the Concept paper on the state support to the development of mass media in Azerbaijan Republic” was approved with the Presidential decree dated to July 31, 2008. The State Fund for the Support of mass media under the President of Azerbaijan Republic was established in 2009 and 3.5 mln. Euros has been allocated from the state budget for the years of 2009-2010;
- Taking into account that the main source of income of mass media outlets is the advertising, special measures are being considered which are to

We are sure the abovementioned measures will further foster the freedom of speech and information, strengthen the free media and thus allow in the near future accepting the defamation law. Currently the international practice in the mentioned field is being studied.

Thank you!