

**Human Dimension Implementation Meeting
Warsaw 2-13 October 2006**

**Working session 12
Fundamental freedoms
Freedom of assembly and association**

**Right of Reply
by the Delegation of the Republic of Azerbaijan**

Allow me, Mr. Moderator to comment on a couple of points raised by distinguished US delegate and the representative of local NGO. It should be stressed, that respective legislation in force, does not allow ceaseless rallies, irrespective of political affiliation of the demonstrators. The opposition forces had declared on a numerous occasions that they were intending to hold ceaseless rallies, which constituted the violation of the law. The referred case, as well as the general experience of the previous years demonstrated the existence of shortcomings in the legislation and in its overall implementation. With the aim of redressing the existing shortcomings the Government of Azerbaijan sent an official appeal to the Venice Commission of the Council of Europe with the request from the latter to lend technical assistance in drafting new law on Freedom of Assembly in April 2006. The OSCE Baku Office was also closely engaged in the reform of this area, since the field operation in Baku initiated detailed discussion during the meeting organized on September 19. The representatives of the OSCE Office, the Government of Azerbaijan, the Venice Commission and local experts were in attendance in the meeting. Discussions produced an agreement to set up a joint commission with the purpose of drafting the recommendations for improvement of respective legislation. The commission will launch its activities after the Venice Commission comes up with the relevant comments. These comments are based on the suggestions put forward by Azerbaijani side regarding amendments to the Law on Freedom of Assembly.

Mr. Moderator,

Finally, I would like to draw your attention to the training on freedom of assembly currently run by the OSCE Office in Baku. This training is designed for members of the Ministry of Interior and for operational level decision-makers of those Ministries and Government Departments which are responsible for the maintenance of public order and public relations. The staff of the Office of the Prosecutor General, Ministry of National Security, Ministry of Justice, Ministry of

Defense and Executive Office of the President is attending this theoretical and practical training.

We believe that this is an excellent opportunity to identify the gaps and redress the shortcomings which may exist and, furthermore, to equip those with responsibility for dealing with these issues at all levels with the confidence to act decisively and in the public interest.

Mr. Moderator,

We appreciate the assistance of international organizations, including that of the OSCE rendered to our Government in this field and stand ready to further such cooperation, with confidence that the political will of our Government connected with such assistance will eliminate all concerns in this regard.

Thank you.