

Human Dimension Implementation Meeting

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Freedom of Media in Azerbaijan

**Madam Moderator
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

Azerbaijani state takes consistent steps to further develop the freedom of speech and information, as well as to ensure the safety of journalists, transparency and responsible media approach and intends to continue its efforts in the future, and is ready for open dialogue on these issues with all international structures and local organizations.

The freedom of speech is ensured in Azerbaijan, a regulatory and legal basis has been developed based on the international standards to regulate this area, hundreds of media outlets act freely, 82 percent of the population has access to the Internet. It's enough to get a domain to create a website. The number of social networks users is over 3 million. A free wi-fi network has been set up in 17 major parks and various public areas where the population is widely used to provide better access to the internet. The number of free Wi-Fi networks users has reached about 7 million.

Freedom of speech is fully guaranteed in Azerbaijan. There are no restrictions. Azerbaijan is a country where internet is completely free. Under such circumstances, there can be no problems with the freedom of speech and expression as well as media. However, some nongovernmental organizations sometimes criticize and even accuse us. These accusations are unfounded.

More than 50 television and radio channels operate. The number of media outlets has reached 5,100.

Democracy plays a special role in the development of any country. A country may be economically rich and have natural resources, but if there isn't a wonderful atmosphere in society and no freedoms, then this development will be half-hearted or unstable. Our advantage lies in the fact that we carry out political and economic reforms in parallel.

Today there operates more than 40 daily, more than 200 weekly and monthly newspapers in Azerbaijan. About 100 newspapers and journals published in the regions. There are 10 national, 1 satellite, 14 regional and 17 cable TV-s broadcasts. There are

more than 300 news portals and agencies. The number of independent commercial companies operating in the country has reached 23.

Therefore, Azerbaijan takes one of the leading stands among CIS countries and Eastern Europe according to quantity of Mass Media.

It is wrong to express concern about the freedom of the press in Azerbaijan, to talk about the closure of media outlets, the torture of journalists, the arrests of human rights defenders, to make statements about impunity, which completely contradicts the existing reality. Azerbaijan is a legal, democratic country and a country, where the rule of law is ensured. Anyone, regardless of his position and social status, or anyone who violates laws, journalism ethics and norms, who has committed an illegal act under the guise of a representative of the media should be responsible for this. This is a matter of principle for the Azerbaijani state and society. Intolerance is demonstrated against journalists in developed European countries, their activities are limited, they are detained, and the right of people to express their opinions freely is suppressed by the most stringent methods. However, unfortunately, such cases do not attract attention of both international media organizations and the OSCE. Taking into account all this, I think interested parties that share his view should be more balanced and objective in their position and do not show a biased approach towards Azerbaijan.