



**PERMANENT DELEGATION
OF NORWAY TO THE OSCE**

STATEMENT IN RESPONSE TO THE
DEPUTY FOREIGN MINISTER OF
AZERBAIJAN

As delivered by Ambassador Robert Kvile
to the Permanent Council,
Vienna, 11 February 2016

Mr Chairman,

I aligned myself with the statement made by the Netherlands on behalf of the European Union. In my national capacity, I would like to add a couple of comments.

Mr Chairman,

The political and humanitarian crisis in Syria has great consequences for the immediate region and for Europe. We are very interested in Azerbaijan's assessment of the situation, and we appreciated Azerbaijan's participation at the Donor Conference held in London on the 4th of February.

We commend the great efforts undertaken by Azerbaijan to provide for its own sizeable population of Internally Displaced Persons. Azerbaijan's experience in this field is of great use to countries with similar challenges.

Mr Chairman,

We remain concerned about Azerbaijan's record in the sphere of human rights. A large number of Human Rights activists remain behind bars. Recent amendments to NGO legislation make it very difficult for independent civil society to operate freely. We urge Azerbaijani authorities

to honour the commitments the country has taken on as an OSCE participating State.

The OSCE institutions are our partners in implementing these commitments. We believe that also Azerbaijan would benefit from making use of their expertise.

Mr Chairman,

In conclusion, let me thank Deputy Minister Azimov for the interesting voluntary report by Azerbaijan to the Human Dimension Committee in April last year, under Norwegian chairmanship, on promoting tolerance and non-discrimination. Such sharing of experience is valuable for our work. We look forward to the event on tolerance and non-discrimination to be organized in Azerbaijan later this year.

Thank you, Mr Chairman