



PERMANENT DELEGATION
OF NORWAY TO THE OSCE

STATEMENT IN RESPONSE TO THE ADDRESS BY THE DEPUTY
MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF AZERBAIJAN,
MR. ARAZ AZIMOV

As delivered by Ambassador Robert Kvile
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
25th October, 2012

Mr. Chairman,

I aligned myself with the statement made by the distinguished representative of Cyprus, on behalf of the European Union, and I fully subscribe to the points raised by him.

In my national capacity I would like to elaborate on one particular issue, on which I also spoke in the Permanent Council in February this year, namely Azerbaijan's National Program for Action to Raise Effectiveness of the Protection of Human Rights and Freedoms in the Republic of Azerbaijan.

Mr. Chairman, in my statement in February, I commended Azerbaijan for putting forward such a plan and said that I believe it is a testimony to high ambitions in the area of human rights, democracy and the rule of law. I noted that the document contains several references to international treaties to which Azerbaijan is a party, as well as to international organizations, the OSCE included, and the benefits that can be drawn by Azerbaijan in cooperating closely with them.

I also noted that the document contains references to civil society and non-governmental institutions and the role they play in modern democracies.

Such an institution, The Human Rights House Azerbaijan, which is linked to an international network of Human Rights Houses, was established in Baku in 2007 and registered by Azerbaijani authorities the same year.

In March 2011, the Ministry of Justice of the Republic of Azerbaijan asked the Human Rights House in Baku to cease its activities, citing a need to conclude a new agreement with the authorities.

Work towards resumption of the activities of the Human Rights House has since been ongoing.

I renew today my hope that the Action Plan, and the ambitions the Plan reflects, will serve as an impetus for a timely and positive conclusion to this process, allowing the Human Rights House Azerbaijan to reopen.

Mr. Chairman, we are grateful to the Azerbaijani Delegation for having introduced the Action Plan in the Human Dimension Committee. I would encourage the delegation to come back to the Committee, at an appropriate time, with an update on the implementation of the Plan.

This would both serve as a positive example to other OSCE participating states and a platform for substantive contributions by the OSCE and its institutions, as well as by individual member states, my own included, towards Azerbaijan reaching the objectives of the Plan.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman